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# EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION AND MIGRATION: ACHIEVING COMMON PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVES



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# Introduction

MARCO FUNK, HEDWIG GIUSTO AND TIMO RINKE

Attitudes towards migrants are difficult to grasp – but they are less divided than populists would have us believe. Nevertheless, an increasing number of Europeans feel uneasy about people who escape poverty and violence in search of a decent and safe life far away from their home. This European uneasiness is expressed in fears that range from unfair competition in the labour market and reduced access to social services in the host countries to the perceived threat posed by migrants to national identities, ethnic homogeneity and security. The aim of this book is to try and shed light on the paradox that the disadvantaged and marginalised represent an imminent threat to our societies. It also aims to explain the origin of a political short circuit that is affecting public opinion right across Europe and impacting on electoral results, political dynamics and immigration policies in many EU member states. This anti-migrant backlash is altering – sometimes dramatically – the balance of power between mainstream parties and so-called populist and extremist ones. It is even changing the face and soul of the European Union.

Changes in people's and governments' attitudes towards immigration, from being (more or less) open to being (more or less) closed and *vice versa*, are far from being infrequent. What is noteworthy is the unprecedented extent to which the topic has become central in national and European debates. At international level, this change of attitude emerged in the decision last year of five countries (three of which European) not to adopt the Global Compact for Migration, promoted by the United Nations, disavowing two years of negotiations and rejecting the first attempt ever to define a common framework of reference for the international community on how to approach this complex issue of migration and advance the establishment of a real and effective global governance of the phenomenon. At European level, we have observed a



growing inability – that indeed is tantamount to a stalemate – by the member states to make decisive steps in the urgent reform of the Dublin regulation, as well as in other migration and asylum policies, except those aimed at border controls and the reduction of irregular arrivals.

European progressive parties have been the ones hardest hit by these developments. They are torn between their desire to stand for their values of solidarity and respect for human rights and dignity regardless of nationality, skin colour or religion, and their mission to stand for the rights and grievances of workers (often the social class that feels particularly threatened by migration). The decline of European progressive parties cannot of course be ascribed entirely to the migration issue. Indeed, their crisis started much earlier and is connected to the broader loss of popular support for traditional parties and organisations. Yet there can be no doubt that for the last couple of years the question of migration has dominated headlines and debates all over Europe, has contributed to increasing polarisation in European politics and societies, has weakened pro-European stances across the continent and has tempted many progressive parties into adopting an increasingly restrictive attitude towards migration in order to prevent the further alienation of their voters and re-gain electoral support.

Against this backdrop the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Fondazione Pietro Nenni and the Fondation Jean Jaurès have promoted the analysis of this change of public opinion in seven EU member states: Hungary, Austria, Italy, Germany, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These case studies have been selected because they offer a representation of a wide range of histories and experiences in the field of immigration, are characterised by different national political contexts and have been impacted in different ways and to different extents by higher levels of immigration in recent years. The order in which the studies are presented roughly reflects the current approach of the respective governments towards migration,

from the most repressive extreme to more positive attitudes. Starting from the analysis of how public opinion towards migration has changed in these countries in the last five years, the aim of this book is to provide recommendations for national progressive parties that are struggling to find ways to deal with such a delicate issue without betraying their basic principles and values. A further step was the identification of commonalities among the case studies in order to define a possible joint strategy for European progressive parties.

In the spectrum of the European countries under analysis, Hungary certainly represents the one with the most extreme and restrictive positions on migration; positions that have their roots in the fact that the country and its population have so far experienced very little immigration and that Fidesz, the ruling party, has exploited and strengthened the deep-rooted sentiments of “caution, antipathy and occasionally outright xenophobia” of the Hungarian population by means of a relentless anti-migration propaganda campaign (facilitated by the tight control on media exerted by the government), in fact aimed at domestic political gains. In his analysis on developments within Hungarian public opinion, author Tamás Boros underlines the small role played by left-wing parties that have not developed a genuine counter narrative but have limited their actions to highlighting the security aspects of the phenomenon and the role of the EU, while condemning the “government’s hate-mongering”. Boros recognises that in the present circumstances, sustaining a position diametrically opposed to that of the government and of the large majority of the population would not produce positive effects, and he therefore underlines the fact that offering global and European solutions to a global question would probably be the most effective strategy.

More multifaceted is the situation in Hungary’s neighbour Austria, where immigration is not a recent phenomenon but goes back decades and where the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) has long struggled on how best to approach it in a context of increasingly

strong anti-immigration and xenophobic parties. In the case of Austria, Oliver Gruber points out that the Social Democratic Party's temptation to follow the trend and adopt anti-immigration stances has not paid off in political and electoral terms. Instead, a more authentic and proactive progressive attitude, presented as the alternative to right-wing positions, would better serve the party's goals.

As in Austria, the political context has changed on the other side of the Alps, in Italy, too, under the pressure of effective anti-immigration propaganda by right-wing parties (mainly the League) and due to a strong increase in migrant arrivals between 2015 and 2017. According to author Luigi Troiani, the lack of a coherent and efficient immigration policy and the unpreparedness of the centre-left government to receive such a great inflow of migrants and refugees, coupled with the Partito Democratico's inability to interpret the needs and wants of its electorate, largely contributed to a dramatic shift of views in public opinion and the overwhelming victory of populist parties in the last national election in March 2018. A precondition for the success of left-wing parties in Italy would be a better understanding of the feelings of abandonment and frustration that characterise their electorates, as well as a broad campaign aimed at informing and reducing the prejudice of Italians against foreigners.

In his chapter on Germany, a country with a longer history of immigration, Thilo Scholle argues that immigration has been and still is an important political issue, but that it is far from being the only one and has not been the single decisive factor in electoral campaigns. Indeed, he suggests that "the debate about immigration is probably largely a proxy for other political questions and feelings of uncertainty about the future of society and social welfare". Recognising these feelings, and shifting the focus from cultural differences framed as "us versus them" to the actual possibility of effective integration, would help defuse the anti-migration sentiment of parts of the left-wing electorate, which is more sensitive

and more permeable to these arguments than the right-wing. Such a communication strategy, however, must be accompanied by concrete social and economic policies aimed at reducing the impression that the local population and newcomers are in competition for the same scarce social and economic resources.

Like Germany, France is another EU member state that has experienced large migratory inflows since the 1950s (but, compared to the other case studies, it experienced fewer arrivals during the so-called refugee crisis). Its main xenophobic party is among the oldest in Europe, as it was founded as early as 1971. Nevertheless, the distribution of Rassemblement National voters in the country and that of migrants show a lack of correlation between xenophobic attitudes and direct contact with immigrants. Hervé Le Bras' chapter on France analyses these geographical distributions as well as the fluctuations of public opinion on migration over the last five years, and underlines that such fluctuations are often linked to tragic or shocking events and are therefore short-term. On this premise, the author concludes that correct information on migration in its different forms is essential in order to allow better understanding both of the phenomenon itself and of people's motives for voting. Moreover, Le Bras advocates the need for more democratic participation in the decision-making that concerns the community – both for locals and newcomers.

Polls in Sweden have also recorded a relative increase in support for an anti-immigration and xenophobic party, the Sweden Democrats, and the relative loss of support for the Social Democrats. In the last national elections (September 2018), the Swedish Social Democrats obtained their lowest percentage of votes since 1918 but nevertheless managed to form a coalition government in January 2019. Starting from the premise that Sweden, unlike other EU member states, is doing quite well in economic as well as social terms, that it has a relatively large foreign-born population and that in general terms anti-immigration sentiment has been declining despite the increase in migrants, author Lisa

Pelling tries to explain the reason for the Sweden Democrats' electoral success. She outlines some concrete suggestions for Social Democrats in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe, highlighting the need to avoid any temptation to adopt repressive rhetoric and policies that clearly belong to the right. At European level she suggests that "a progressive strategy must be based on a long-term vision of Europe as a welcoming continent, which is open to legal, orderly and safe migration".

The chapter on the United Kingdom authored by Sarah Kyambi differs from the others illustrated not only because of Brexit being imminent, but because debate in the country, unlike in the rest of the EU, has been mostly dominated by the issue of labour migration. This chapter focuses largely on Scotland in order to underline the differences between it and the rest of the UK in its approach to immigration. The political debate about migration in Scotland tends to be more positive than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and the Scottish government, mostly driven by considerations about demographic decline, has successfully supported a more open approach to immigration. This leads Kyambi to assert that progressives should not be afraid to voice the positive impact that immigration can have on receiving societies and economies. In fact, they should explain that immigration can help solve some of the challenges facing ordinary citizens.

This book concludes with a set of short recommendations to European progressive parties that are the result of the joint work of the authors and editors. Over the course of a year-long project, they met several times to discuss and reflect, among themselves and with other experts, on each of the case studies here illustrated. The recommendations reflect the commonalities between the different cases that emerged and have been drafted keeping the upcoming European elections in mind. However, they also strive to be a broader point of reference that may prove to be useful beyond the next election and provide political parties with some tools for dealing with an issue that will remain central in the years to come.





# Hungary: A no-go zone for migrants

TAMÁS BOROS

The nature of Hungarian political and public debates about migration differs from the debates in western Europe. Hungary has traditionally experienced low levels of immigration, and thus until the refugee crisis of 2015, the average Hungarian citizen was only liable to encounter a few tens of thousand Chinese immigrants and ethnic Hungarians who moved here from the neighbouring countries where substantial Hungarian minorities continue to live. The lack of a colonial history, the wariness towards foreigners stemming from the Hungarian historical experience – from the 16th century, the country was occupied by the Ottomans (Turks), the Austrian Habsburgs, the Nazi Germans and the Soviet army, respectively – along with the country's linguistic isolation and low levels of interaction with the residents of other countries, all combine to make Hungarians think of their society as one that is closed and rejects foreigners.

This general sense of caution, antipathy and occasionally outright xenophobia might have been open to some degree of modulation and change – if after 2015 there had been a discernible political will to that effect, in conjunction with a vibrant and free press, or a pro-refugee civic organisation or church with strong social embeddedness. But the government saw communication and political opportunities in the refugee crisis, which it could use to boost its own popularity. To this end, it launched an anti-immigration propaganda campaign that cost hundreds of millions of euros, drafted and passed legal amendments aimed at debilitating the work of NGOs that help refugees, and – exploiting the fact that some 80% of media are dominated by the governing party – stymied any reasonable dialogue about the refugee issue, arguing that the only split that existed in Hungarian society was the dividing line between pro-immigration traitors and patriots who want to defend Hungary from foreigners.



In this political and media environment, the Hungarian public did not have the opportunity to genuinely weigh up what actual benefits and disadvantages the impact of migration could yield, it did not have the option of drawing on personal experience in deciding whether accepting refugees would indeed cause the massive problems propagated by the government, nor was there any opportunity to consider the various moral and international law obligations concerning refugees. These decisions were rendered by the government instead of by the citizens. Subsequently, a hitherto inconceivable propaganda campaign, spanning for years, was put in motion to make the population believe that the total rejection of refugees had in fact been its own, that is, the public's, decision.

As a consequence, great caution needs to be applied in juxtaposing the current attitude of the Hungarian public towards migration with the climate of opinion that prevails on this issue in other countries that have more pluralistic media landscapes. We must keep in mind that the opportunities available to progressives in Hungary differ substantially from the range of options available to progressive parties in western European liberal democracies. At the same time, as we look around and observe the surge in the number of countries that follow the 'Hungarian model' – from Italy to Poland – the analysis can yield important insights for the other member states of the EU as well.

### **The context: Immigrants and refugees in Hungary**

Compared to other EU member states, the ratio of immigrants in Hungary is exceedingly low, less than 2% of the population of 9.8 million. This continues to hold even though the number of foreign citizens staying in Hungary has grown by over 21,000 persons since 2014. Back in 2014, the number of foreigners residing in Hungary stood at over 140,000. By 2018, this number had surpassed 160,000. However, a significant portion of immigrants were born in the neighbouring countries (most of which are in the

EU) and were ethnically Hungarian. Although their number has dropped by 8,000 over the past four years, Romanians (who predominantly hail from the ethnic Hungarian community in Romania) continue to make up the largest national contingent of immigrants. While in 2014 over 30,000 Romanians resided in Hungary, by 2018 their number had dropped to slightly over 22,000. The drop in their numbers is presumably also a result of the fact that Romanian citizens with Hungarian ancestry can apply for dual citizenship, and thus many have obtained Hungarian ID and no longer count as foreigners.

In recent years, there has been substantial growth in the number of Chinese who reside in Hungary. In 2016, they became Hungary's second largest foreign diaspora, after ethnic Hungarians from Romania. Their numbers have increased by over 50% since 2014, and today, in 2018, almost 20,000 Chinese people live in Hungary. The Asian community, including the Chinese, boasts the biggest growth among Hungary's immigrant communities; their numbers have expanded by more than 15,000 over the past four years and there were nearly 45,000 Asians in Hungary in 2018. Germans make up the third biggest expatriate community, but their numbers have declined somewhat and there are now 790 fewer of them than four years ago. At the same time, roughly two-thirds of immigrants in Hungary, some 100,000 people, are European citizens, and half came here from countries that border on Hungary.

**Table 1:** Foreign citizens residing in Hungary (Total population of Hungary: 9 778 000)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total: Europe</b>	<b>101,538</b>	<b>100,501</b>	<b>105,825</b>	<b>99,194</b>	<b>104,254</b>
By country: Romania	30,924	28,641	29,665	24,040	22,747
Serbia	3,051	2,430	2,426	2,312	3,356
Ukraine	8,317	6,906	6,749	5,774	10,503
Germany	18,669	18,773	19,403	18,627	17,879
Poland	1,863	1,964	2,129	2,061	1,928
Russia	3,657	4,341	4,935	4,903	4,790
Slovakia	8,275	8,744	9,393	9,519	9,652
Croatia	650	831	1,012	1,064	1,221
Austria	3,917	3,990	4,007	4,021	3,743
<b>Total: Asia</b>	<b>28,832</b>	<b>33,868</b>	<b>39,238</b>	<b>39,937</b>	<b>44,692</b>
By country: China	12,716	16,467	19,811	19,111	19,905
<b>Total: America</b>	<b>5,102</b>	<b>6,008</b>	<b>5,408</b>	<b>5,397</b>	<b>5,891</b>
By country: United States	3,021	3,090	3,299	3,198	3,373
<b>Total: Africa</b>	<b>4,492</b>	<b>4,985</b>	<b>5,513</b>	<b>5,985</b>	<b>6,334</b>
<b>Total: Australia and Oceania</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>638</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>140,536</b>	<b>145,968</b>	<b>156,606</b>	<b>151,132</b>	<b>161,809</b>

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_eves\\_1](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_eves_1), retrieved 15 September 2018.

Due to the low number of immigrants in Hungary and their comparatively high level of cultural homogeneity (two-thirds hail from a European cultural background), it was not only the sheer number of refugees that was a novelty for Hungarian society in 2015, but also their country of origin and their religion. In the first year of the crisis, in 2015, over 177,000 asylum applications were submitted in Hungary. The number of refugee seekers declined substantially in 2016, partly as a result of the EU-Turkey agreement, and partly because of the stricter Hungarian legislation and the border fence erected at Hungary's southern frontier. In 2016, the Hungarian authorities received fewer than 30,000 such petitions, a figure that was even lower than the pre-crisis level of 2014. In 2017, a mere 3,397 applications were submitted, which means that the number of asylum requests dropped back to the level experienced in the early 2000s. In other words, Hungarians have basically not had the opportunity to encounter refugees personally in any form since 2015. It is almost exclusively the pro-government media, the government propaganda, and the continuous extension of Hungary's state of emergency due to the 'migration threat', that create the impression there is an ongoing crisis in Hungary.

This is especially seen by the fact that the numbers of refugees whose asylum requests were granted did not even remotely reflect the vastly increased mass of asylum seekers. In every year investigated here, the number of those who were recognised as refugees in Hungary ranged between 100-200 people. However, there was a substantial rise in the number of those under subsidiary protection in 2017. Over 1,000 people were deemed eligible for this status, which implies that even though they did not qualify as refugees in the state's assessment, the authorities decided that if they were returned home they would be subject to such grave potential harm that they should be entitled to subsidiary protection. In addition to these, between 2014 and 2016 the Hungarian state gave 6-7 people annually a status of "tolerated", and this number surged to 75 in 2017. These are people who are neither recognised as refugees nor entitled to subsidiary protection but

who nevertheless cannot be sent back to their own countries because they might be subject to torture, inhumane treatment or the death penalty there. As for their countries of origin, in 2014 most asylum seekers who arrived in Hungary came from Kosovo (21,453), in 2015 the most frequent country of origin was Syria (64,587), while in 2016 and 2017 this was Afghanistan (11,052 and 1,432 persons, respectively).

**Table 2:** Number of persons who arrived in Hungary as asylum seekers and the number of those who received international protection (2014–)

	Asylum seekers	Qualified for refugee status	Qualified for subsidiary protection status	Qualified for tolerated status
<b>2014</b>	42,777	240	236	7
<b>2015</b>	177,135	146	356	6
<b>2016</b>	29,432	154	271	7
<b>2017</b>	3,397	106	1110	75

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_eves\\_1](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_eves_1), retrieved 15 September 2018.

This means that since the onset of the refugee crisis in 2015, 406 people have been recognised as refugees in Hungary, while another 1,737 have received subsidiary protection and 88 have qualified for the status of tolerated. In other words, when talking about the government’s refugee policies, the total number of people affected is a few thousand.

In light of these figures it is hardly surprising that until as recently as 2015 the political and public policy debates going back decades in western Europe on the issues of immigration, the integration of immigrants and their social situation, never took place in Hungary. Although numerous NGOs worked and fought for the rights and opportunities of the few thousand refugees in Hungary, until the refugee crisis only a narrow circle of people with an interest in this issue followed their work and the related questions. For none of the Hungarian political parties (not even for the progressive ones)

was this issue particularly relevant, nor had they previously taken any position on it. On the whole, therefore, the governing parties were alone in addressing this topic in 2015 and – as the next chapter will show – this was a major factor in Hungarian society coming to harbour the most vociferously anti-refugee attitudes in the European Union.

### **The current situation: Attitudes towards immigrants in Hungary**

The public perception of refugees, immigrants and the EU's refugee policies are clearly determined by certain factors – which were also discussed in previous sections – such as the historical memory of Hungarians concerning their nation's encounter with foreign cultures and foreigners in general, the country's linguistic isolation, the low number of immigrants in Hungary, and the Orbán government's appropriation of the discourse concerning refugees and their propagandistic use of the issue. The surveys conducted by Eurobarometer clearly show that it is not only Hungarians who reject migrants, but also the majority of citizens in *all* other eastern European countries. An Iron Curtain still exists in this regard: the division in the attitude towards migration can be observed even within the former eastern and western part of Germany. There are at least four different reasons for this phenomenon. First, none of the eastern European countries were involved in the European colonisation between the 15th and the 20th century, and their nations did not therefore build their economies on labour and raw materials from Africa or Asia. Second, as these countries were parts of the Communist bloc after the second world war, they followed a different strategy from the western European countries to deal with the demographic challenges of the 1950s. In the communist bloc (except the Soviet Union), no migrants from other continents were let in to solve the problem of labour shortage, but alternative policies were implemented, such as a ban on abortion, for example. Consequently, living and/or working together with people from different religions, with a different skin colour and a different culture, has been an unknown experience for most central and

eastern Europeans. Third, as poverty is still a real challenge in this region, stability and security are more important values for most citizens than change and freedom. And fourth, most people in post-Communist countries believe that it is the task of the 'rich western Europeans' to help refugees, not theirs.

In light of the above, it is hardly surprising that Hungarian society unequivocally rejects immigrants: according to a Eurobarometer survey<sup>1</sup> almost two-thirds of Hungarian society (63%) believe that immigration is a problem, a fifth of Hungarian society thinks it is as much of a problem as it is an opportunity, while fewer than one in every ten (9%) respondents believes that it is a positive phenomenon overall. With these figures, Hungary ranks as the most anti-immigration country in the European Union. To put the Hungarian figures into perspective, 38% of EU citizens overall think of immigration as a problem, 31% believe that it is as much a problem as an opportunity, while every fifth respondent perceived immigration from outside the EU to be more of an advantage.

**Table 3:** Do you think immigration from outside the EU is more of a problem or more of an opportunity for (our country) today?

	Immigration is more of a problem	Immigration is equally a problem and an opportunity	Immigration is more of an opportunity	Immigration is neither a problem nor an opportunity	Don't know
HU	63%	21%	9%	6%	1%
EU28	38%	31%	20%	8%	3%

Source: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*,

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumtKy/82537>, retrieved 10 September 2018, p. 57.

Respondents in Hungary were also rather sceptical regarding the general integration of immigrants: the majority believed that most immigrants have not been integrated successfully. The prevailing perception in Hungary also runs counter to the EU average. Interestingly, in the EU overall respondents divided roughly in the same proportions as in Hungary, except the majority and minority viewpoints in Hungary and the EU were exactly the reverse. Just behind the Bulgarians and the Estonians, the opinions of Hungarians on this issue are the least positive in the entire European Union.

**Table 4:** Generally speaking, how successful or not is the integration of most immigrants living in (our country)

	On the whole, integration is successful	On the whole, integration is not successful	Don't know
HU	37	53	10
EU28	54	40	6

Source: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, p. 205.

However, a substantial majority of Hungarian society (86%) have no personal connection whatsoever to immigrants. Only every tenth Hungarian (9%) has friends who are immigrants, 3% have relatives who were born outside the EU, and 2% have migrants both in their family and among their friends. These ratios lag far behind the EU average, where 41% have some level of personal relationship with immigrants. Moreover, even the existing relations of Hungarians with migrants tend to involve mostly ethnic Hungarians born outside Hungary.

Apart from Hungarians, only Romanians and Bulgarians (91% and 92%, respectively), have little personal experience with people born outside the EU. This means that anti-immigration sentiment is most pervasive in Hungary, even if people in Hungary also tend to be among those who have the least personal experience with immigrants.



**Table 5:** Please tell me which of the following statements best applies to you?

	You have friends who are immigrants	You have both friends and family members who are immigrants	You have family members who are immigrants	None of these	Don't know
HU	9	2	3	86	0
EU28	27	9	4	59	1

Source: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, p. 204.

In Hungary, people tend to feel uncomfortable around immigrants in general: almost three-quarters of Hungarians (73%) would feel uncomfortable if they were in some type of personal relationship with immigrants, and only 17% said that such a situation would not constitute a problem for them. It can therefore be asserted that on the whole Hungary ranks as the second least welcoming nation for refugees after Bulgaria. At the same time, the data also show that when it comes to immigration, the rate of rejection is highest in Hungary, ahead of Bulgaria. Among EU citizens, roughly a third (34%) said they would feel uncomfortable in such a situation, whereas over half said that close contact with immigrants would not bother them.

**Table 6:** Would you personally feel comfortable or uncomfortable having an immigrant as your...  
Manager, Work colleague, Neighbour, Doctor, Family member (including partner), Friend?

	Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Don't know
HU (total)	73	17	9
EU28 (total)	34	57	10

Source: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, p. 197.

Hungarians are also decidedly dissatisfied with the way the European Union has handled the refugee crisis. With respect to common European immigration policy, two camps of roughly the same size emerge in Hungary: according to the most recent Eurobarometer<sup>2</sup> survey, 48% of Hungarians support and 49% oppose EU-level migration policies. This lags far behind the EU

average, since on the whole a common European migration policy is supported by a two-thirds majority of the public in the 28 member states of the EU, while only a quarter of the public rejects it. Hungarians are thus among those who are most opposed to a common migration policy, with only the Czechs, Slovaks and Estonians being less supportive.

Hungarians' negative attitude towards migrants is also related to the fact that the population views Muslims unfavourably in general. Based on a comparative opinion poll conducted by Pew Research in 2017, 72% of Hungarians see Muslims negatively, which was the highest number among the ten countries where the research was conducted.<sup>3</sup> This number is almost three times higher than the ones in France, Germany, or the UK.

The Hungarian public is also divided on the issue of what further measures need to be taken against illegal migration: 39% believe that this issue should be addressed only at the EU level, while one third (35%) think it should be handled exclusively at the national level. A further 21% believe that it should be handled jointly by the EU and the member states. A mere 3% of the public believe that no further measures are necessary, which implies that there is full consensus in Hungarian society that the measures taken thus far are insufficient. Incidentally, the Hungarian responses in this context fall near the average of the European public's expectations concerning EU measures (where 60% of Hungarians want some level of European engagement, the EU average is 61%). Apart from the Hungarians, the ratio of those who professed satisfaction with the prevailing measures also stands at 3% among Estonians, Maltese and Greeks.

The Eurobarometer study about Europe's future<sup>4</sup> clearly indicates Hungarians' support for strengthening Europe's external borders: when respondents were asked to select the two factors that would be most important for the future of Europe, the second most frequent response (39%) after uniform standards of living was strengthening the EU's external borders. The ratio of Hungarians who agreed the EU's external borders should be strengthened was the third highest after Austrian and Greek respondents, while the EU average was a mere 23%. Interestingly, only 12% of Hungarian respondents mentioned a common army, which is roughly on a par with the European average.

The southern border fence is also popular with an overwhelming majority of Hungarians. According to a 2015 survey by the Hungarian polling company Medián,<sup>5</sup> support for the fence that was under construction at the time stood at two-thirds, and the Nézőpont Institute (a think tank and pollster with close ties to the Hungarian government), found similar results: their research showed that 82% of Hungarians wanted the border fence, and even 70% of opposition voters agreed it was necessary.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the EU's policy on the migration quota is also overwhelmingly rejected in Hungary. In 2016, the Hungarian government initiated a referendum on this issue, and despite the opposition parties calling for the boycott of the vote and the referendum campaign being biased and dominated by the anti-migration propaganda of the government, 98% of those people who cast a valid vote (and 41% of the total population) rejected the migration quota. Only 2% supported the EU proposal. Most Hungarians considered the EU's idea to be a violation of Hungarian sovereignty,<sup>7</sup> and even those who were more open to accepting refugees believed that their compulsory resettlement would not be the right step to solve this crisis.

On most migration-related issues, left-wing voters – the supporters of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and of the Democratic Coalition (DK) – are more open-minded and accepting of foreigners than Fidesz voters. However, despite these differences large seg-

ments of the left-wing base agree with Fidesz's anti-refugee and anti-migrant policies. As mentioned previously, four-fifths of the Hungarian public support the border fence erected on the southern border to keep migrants out, which is the most important symbol of Orbán's refugee policies. Even though it is Orbán's signature policy, 65% of the voters who support the Democratic Coalition and 49% of MSZP voters also support the fence. Eight out of ten people (76%) in the Hungarian public oppose the introduction of the EU quota system. Among opposition voters, this includes 50% of DK supporters and 46% of MSZP supporters. On the whole, a hypothetical scenario in which foreigners with a different cultural background settle near the interviewed citizens' place of residence evoked deep fears in 21% of MSZP voters and in 26% of DK voters. Among Fidesz's supporters, this ratio stood at 38%.

This fear is due not only to western European terror attacks but also to the one-sided and exaggerated media presentation in Hungary of the immigration situation. Hungarians' attitudes towards migration are pre-eminently influenced by the pro-government media. In the last few years, 93% of the news broadcast in the public media has included some reference to the migration crisis, and 95% of the reports have either provided information about or identified with the government's anti-immigration stance. The government also spends around €50 million each year on anti-migration billboards, television advertisements and Facebook campaigns.

Throughout all of this, the governing party's anti-immigrant narrative has never been countered by any opposing narrative. While western European centre-left parties have been staking out a position on the migration issue for at least 50 years now, and in fact have often emerged as the most popular parties among immigrants, their Hungarian sister parties did not address this issue prior to 2015 because it was not seen as relevant in Hungary. When the first refugees began to arrive at the time of the refugee crisis, the largest left-wing party, the Hungarian Socialist Party, as well as the Democratic Coalition, which had been founded as an

MSZP split-off, unequivocally professed their solidarity with those in need. Both parties sharply criticised Viktor Orbán's anti-refugee campaign, along with the fence being built in the south and the dismal state of refugee camps. As the crisis deepened, however, and as it emerged that refugees were arriving in Hungary by the hundreds of thousands, with the fever pitch of the government anti-refugee campaign rising continuously, there was a growing uncertainty among the left-wing parties as to whether they should stick to their principles or to their voters. Finally, the parties involved decided to stress the importance of Hungary's security while condemning the government's hate-mongering.

Consequently, the Hungarian Socialist Party published its official programme on migration under the name of Responsibility and Security. In this paper, the Socialist Party emphasises that Hungary should cooperate with the European Union – especially with its agency, FRONTEX – and NATO in strengthening the European external borders. The Sociality Party also stresses that it is committed to maintaining security and public order, but the rights and human dignity of asylum-seekers should also be respected, and their applications should be examined in a professional and unbiased manner.<sup>8</sup>

However, on the whole, the vast majority of left-wing voters – despite being somewhat more sympathetic to the plight of refugees than their right-wing counterparts – agreed more with the prime minister's management of this issue than with the position held by their own parties. At the same time, it is also true that the left did not even make an attempt to convince its own voters to change their basic attitudes on these issues. Instead, when faced with the government's steamroller campaign, they ended up toning down their pro-refugee rhetoric.

## Recommendations for progressive parties

The issue of migration has dominated Hungarian public discourse for years now. Fidesz effectively campaigned on this issue alone in the parliamentary election campaign of 2018 and won the unusually high turnout election with a share of 49%. As discussed earlier, a substantial portion of left-wing voters also supported Fidesz's approach to the refugee issue, and as the focus group studies prior to the election showed, there was only one public policy decision taken by the Orbán government that voters who are least sympathetic to the government overwhelmingly agreed with: the fence on the southern border of Hungary. Nevertheless, there are still some 30% of voters in Hungary who are open to (or at least are not rejecting of) refugees and migrants. Given the support of left-wing parties (MSZP: 9%, DK: 4 % among the entire electorate), these 30% could provide an opportunity to appeal to new voters through a more open and progressive communication on immigration policy. However, even though these voters are theoretically more open-minded when it comes to immigration, the issue is not a priority for them. Thus, although they might find a more refugee-friendly narrative – which differs from that of the governing party – more appealing, this would not in and of itself be enough to make them turn towards the party that embraces such an approach. Unlike the voters who professed an open-minded approach to immigration, the voters who reject it often view this as an issue of life or death, and thus the position of the given party on immigration may be decisive for them.

Moreover, in this massively tabloid-dominated, simplified media environment, moderate, temperate messages cannot be successful. Obviously, for moral reasons the left cannot spout xenophobic messages of the kind advanced by the Hungarian right – and it would be neither credible nor politically beneficial. However, unequivocally embracing a stance that is diametrically opposed to that proffered by the government – ie, an emphatically welcoming, pro-immigration policy – would run so drastically counter to

the majority view among its voters that such a change in the current course would be tantamount to political suicide.

In addition, part of this story is that – unlike in the majority of western European countries – in reality there is no immigration issue in Hungary. As has previously been seen, there are neither immigrants nor refugees in any substantial number in the country. There is, however, a general sense of uncertainty about the future, a widespread fear of the unknown and a sense of panic concerning the continuously ongoing changes in the world. For a significant portion of Hungarians, the immigrants living and arriving in Europe embody these threats: they represent unknown cultures, speak unknown languages, and appear to be changing the previously prevailing image of Europe. The last thing needed by someone who is fearful of becoming poor, of losing their job and their status, and of the runaway and constantly changing world wrought by globalisation, is the perception that their customary environment and culture are also undergoing radical change.

In central and eastern Europe, it is therefore up to the left to offer a policy that can address these uncertainties, help the citizens ensure that their everyday life is not dominated by fears of unpaid bills, redundancies, growing social inequalities and deteriorating healthcare services. Because for the time being, these concerns and perceptions are dominant.<sup>9</sup> This does not imply that the left is off the hook with respect to coming up with answers to the refugee issue. An approach that urges a supranational pan-European solution rather than national policies, and which embodies solidarity with refugees while at the same time also rejecting economic migrants, would be acceptable for the central and eastern European left, both morally and in terms of public appeal.

Three recommendations can thus be made regarding a progressive but at the same time popular and feasible communication on migration in a politically hostile environment:

- The left should be tough on the causes of migration, not on migrants. Mass migration is usually caused by injustice, inequality, lack of jobs, wars, famines, or global warming. These problems are exactly those the left should fight against. Progressives could talk about how they want to deal with these issues, what visions or policy recommendations they have regarding inequalities, global warming and wars, so they use exclusively a progressive (and never a radical right) communication narrative about migration.
- Everyone accepts that migration is a global issue. Progressives should emphasise that global questions – such as climate change – cannot be solved on a national level. One of the reasons why nationalist politicians usually deny climate change is because such a problem can only be solved on a global level – which contradicts their national perspective. Progressives should stress the importance of European cooperation as opposed to nationalist solutions. A “Success comes when people act together; failure tends to happen alone” kind of sentence can convey a pro-European message against the nationalist ones.
- We must recognise that most people in central and eastern Europe demand more protection and not more changes. Progressives should therefore not keep on telling them that “migration is inevitable”, “people must adapt to this new world”, “change/migration is necessary”, etc. People reject those politicians who go with the flow and who are unable to control political and economic processes.

However, all in all, it must also be acknowledged that the migration issue is the trump card of the populist right – the longer this issue dominates European politics, the stronger the right-wing parties will become. It is thus in the fundamental interest of the left to steer public discourse back to its own issues: healthcare, education, the situation of public services, growing social inequalities and low wages. This is all the more the case as in numerous countries – including Hungary and Austria – the intense debates



about migration deflect voters' attention from the fact that governments are pursuing economic policies that predominantly benefit the (upper) middle-class, while the poorer and less educated strata are increasingly falling behind compared to the wealthiest. The debate about migration is a communication trap laid by the populist right. This is definitely the case in central and eastern Europe, but for the most part this also applies to western Europe – and the left should try to steer clear of this. The left needs to come up with public policy responses to the problems stemming from and related to immigration and the refugee crisis, but it also needs to make sure that its policies and narratives do not centre on immigration and refugees but its own traditional issues.

## Notes

- 1 European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/82537>, retrieved 10 September 2018.
- 2 European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 89*, 2018, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/83551>, retrieved 10 September 2018.
- 3 M. Lipka, *Muslims and Islam: Key findings in the U.S. and around the world*, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>, retrieved 14 October 2018.
- 4 European Commission, *Future of Europe*, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/8354>, retrieved 3 September 2018.
- 5 Source: Median poll, <http://www.webaudit.hu/object.c38fa2c9-5bc2-40c9-ae38-bab515a5f172.ivy>.
- 6 Nézőpont Intézet poll, <http://nezopontintezet.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/kutat%C3%A1s2.pdf>.
- 7 The question of the referendum on the EU quota also related to this concern of the Hungarians: “Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?”.
- 8 Hungarian Socialist Party, *Responsibility and Security*, 2016, [www.mszip.hu/dokumentumok](http://www.mszip.hu/dokumentumok), retrieved 14 October 2018.
- 9 See the study entitled *The Hungarian fear*, [https://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/288/9\\_hungarian\\_fears\\_eng\\_v2.pdf](https://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/288/9_hungarian_fears_eng_v2.pdf).



# Swimming upstream? Attitudes towards immigration in Austria and the electoral implications for progressive politics

OLIVER GRUBER

Immigration has become one of the most divisive issues in contemporary Europe, influencing elections and reshaping the structure of party competition in western and eastern Europe. It is the vehicle for a politics of identity perfected by the political right through effectively linking the changing patterns of immigration to the emotions of dissatisfied voters who fear a decline of their status. This formula is tied to shifts in public opinion, allowing right-wing populist positions to enter the political mainstream and to alter the approaches of mainstream parties on the centre-right and centre-left.

Austria's location at the edge of eastern and western Europe makes it a particularly interesting case for analysis. Traditionally being one of the more immigration-sceptic countries in western Europe, in response to the 2015 refugee policy crisis its political environment and public opinion have shifted further to the right. Centre-right and radical right political parties have positioned Austria as the closest western European ally of the Visegrad group on this issue. This development has created an increasingly unfavourable environment for progressive political actors on migration, who are forced to swim upstream against the current trend.

This chapter takes a closer look at the evolution of public opinion patterns on immigration in Austria and their most recent changes. It then focuses more specifically on the opinions and motives of different voter groups in order to identify the political opportunities for progressive parties on the centre-left with regard to immigration positions. It finally concludes with recommendations for a progressive policy response to the current right-wing hegemony.

## **The origins of a controversial public debate: Public opinion and party competition on immigration since the 1990s**

Austria is no stranger to the experience of larger immigration movements. With several larger refugee flows from eastern Europe, with the brief episode of the so called ‘guest worker’ regime in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then especially with the fall of the iron curtain, Austria experienced a very large increase in immigration during the cold war period. Since then the influx to Austria had different origins: EU-internal immigration (following the country’s accession to the EU), third country immigration from eastern and southern Europe (especially during the Yugoslav Wars), and increasingly after the year 2000 also refugees from Asia and Africa. In short, from 1989 there was a tripling of the share of foreign nationals (from around 4% to around 13%) until the refugee movements of 2015 and 2016.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of public opinion, Austrians’ scepticism towards immigrants has been above average compared to other EU member states. Indeed, Austria’s public opinion on immigrants has been one of the most negative in western Europe long before the 2015 events. This is confirmed by two longitudinal data sources on European public opinion (see Table 1):

- a) The European Values Study shows that, especially since the 2000s, public opinion has turned increasingly negative towards various categories of migrant groups, such as people of different skin colour, Muslims, and immigrant or guest workers. However, longitudinal surveys with large gaps between field periods always carry a bias of domestic short-term events that distort data;

b) Yet, the European Social Survey, a more frequently conducted survey (biannually), also confirms this pattern. Since 2002, when asked whether immigrants make the country a worse or better place to live, Austrians have responded more negatively than the European average in every survey regarding this question.

**Table 1a:** Attitudes towards immigrants across Europe – longitudinal patterns

<b>Index of antipathy toward immigrants (0=no group rejected, 1=every group rejected)</b>			
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2008</b>
Austria	.142	.119	.232
Belgium	.213	.165	.087
Denmark	.113	.114	.069
Finland	.131	.145	.155
France	.132	.124	.051
Germany	.159	.087	.128
Ireland	.081	.130	.132
Italy	.133	.164	.171
Netherlands	.101	.074	.148
Portugal	.155	.056	.114
Spain	.089	.102	.069
Sweden	.108	.049	.092
United Kingdom	.118	.128	.110
<b>Average</b>	<b>.129</b>	<b>.112</b>	<b>.120</b>

**Table 1b:** Attitudes towards immigrants across Europe - longitudinal patterns

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	14-year-avg.
<b>SE</b>	6.2	6.2	6.0	6.1	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.3	<b>6.3</b>
<b>DK</b>	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.8	6.1	5.7		<b>5.7</b>
<b>PL</b>	5.7	5.2	5.5	5.9	5.9	6.0	5.5	5.5	<b>5.6</b>
<b>IE</b>	5.8	5.3	5.7	5.7	5.1	5.4	5.3	6.0	<b>5.5</b>
<b>FI</b>	5.6	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.6	5.5	5.6	<b>5.5</b>
<b>CH</b>	5.5	5.3	5.1	5.3	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.5	<b>5.4</b>
<b>NO</b>	5.5	4.8	4.8	5.1	5.3	5.7	5.5	5.7	<b>5.3</b>
<b>NL</b>	5.3	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4	<b>5.1</b>
<b>ES</b>	5.1	4.7	5.1	4.9	5.2	5.3	5.1	5.5	<b>5.1</b>
<b>DE</b>	5.1	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.9	5.4	5.3	5.2	<b>5.0</b>
<b>IL</b>	5.1	4.8			4.8	4.8	5.0	4.8	<b>4.9</b>
<b>LT</b>	4.7				4.7	5.0	5.0	4.7	<b>4.8</b>
<b>GB</b>	4.9	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.7	5.4	<b>4.7</b>
<b>BE</b>	5.0	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	5.1	<b>4.7</b>
<b>FR</b>	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.9	4.8	<b>4.6</b>
<b>SI</b>	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.4	<b>4.5</b>
<b>SK</b>	4.5		4.4	4.8	4.4	4.3			<b>4.5</b>
<b>AT</b>	4.2	4.7	4.4	4.2	4.9	4.8	4.4	4.2	<b>4.5</b>
<b>EE</b>	4.3		4.0	4.1	4.4	4.8	4.9	4.3	<b>4.4</b>
<b>UA</b>	4.1		4.8	4.3	4.2	4.4			<b>4.3</b>
<b>PT</b>	4.6	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.4	5.3	<b>4.3</b>
<b>CY</b>	4.7	4.2	4.1	4.5	3.9	3.3			<b>4.1</b>
<b>IT</b>	3.6	4.5	3.9			4.4		3.6	<b>4.0</b>
<b>CZ</b>	4.0				4.1	4.2	3.9	3.7	<b>4.0</b>
<b>HU</b>	3.7	4.0	4.0	3.8	4.2	4.4	4.0	3.5	<b>3.9</b>

Immigrants make a country a worse (0) or better (10) place - Country average.

Note: The European Values Study calculates antipathy based on attitudes towards unwelcome neighbours. 'Migrants' in this survey denotes people of a different skin colour, Muslims, and immigrant or guest workers.

The index is calculated by the number of unwelcome neighbours indicated by a respondent, and ranges from 1 (every group being rejected) to 0 (no groups rejected).<sup>2</sup>

The European Social Survey calculates scepticism towards immigrants based on an 11-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (absolutely negative) to 10 (absolutely positive). Calculation is based on unweighted data, and only countries with at least five available data points between 2002 and 2016 are considered.

## **Political consequences of the changing migration patterns**

From the 1990s, this dominance of anti-immigrant attitudes in Austria contributed to the growth of a successful populist radical right party, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), in the Austrian parliament. It also resulted in meandering mainstream parties, struggling for a winning strategy in the face of the growing radical right challenger and the new importance of immigration.<sup>3</sup> The political result was an increasing importance of immigration as a political issue until 2015, which led to the growing strength of both a populist radical right party (FPÖ) and two smaller, culturally liberal parties (Greens, Liberals) at the expense of mainstream parties, both on the centre-right (ÖVP) and centre-left (SPÖ). On the federal level, it resulted in the participation of the FPÖ (and after the party's collapse in 2002, in the participation of the Jörg Haider-led split-off Union for Austria's Future – BZÖ) in government between 2000 and 2006 until a centrist 'grand' coalition between the two mainstream parties returned to power. As it approached 2015, this grand coalition had shrivelled to a tiny majority of just eight parliamentary seats (the smallest grand coalition in Austrian post-war history) and it was struggling with decreasing popularity. At the same time, the FPÖ had recaptured most of its former strength and both Greens and Liberals had stabilised as liberal opposition parties.

### **The 2015 refugee policy crisis and its consequences for Austrian politics**

The events of 2015 and 2016 left a big mark on Austrian politics in general, and on progressive political parties in particular. With about 130,000 requests for asylum in Austria in those two years alone, the total number of foreign nationals rose to 15% at the beginning of 2017. The political response was characterised by conflict that reshaped the political landscape. Its main reasons were the traditional conflicts between national and provincial government levels inherent in Austria's federalist political system on the one hand, and



partisan politics on the other. It fuelled an ongoing struggle within the federal government coalition of the SPÖ and ÖVP about the right response to the refugee influx and led to the mainstream parties' decline in the polls in favour of a growing radical right, which surpassed the mainstream parties in opinion polls. The refugee influx also led to the Austrian government becoming the vanguard for a closed-borders approach and 'asylum caps', eventually forcing the then-chancellor and SPÖ party leader, Werner Faymann, to resign in May 2016 over internal party pressure. This was the first time in Austrian history that a chancellor had stumbled over the management of immigration and asylum, and his successor, neo-politician Christian Kern, was left with a difficult heritage.<sup>4</sup>

*The current state of competition.* Today, immigration has arguably turned into one of the most decisive issues for Austrian politics. The refugee movements since 2015 have raised public awareness of immigration to yet another level. More strikingly, however, they have fuelled an increasing polarisation of public opinion. This has been reflected in, and intensified by, party political changes. In addition to the politicisation of immigration by Austrian fringe parties both on the left and right, within the ÖVP the refugee issue has become increasingly politicised by a party faction led by the former popular foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz. After his takeover of party leadership and the announcement of snap elections in spring 2017, immigration and refugees became the party's main campaign issue heading up to the autumn elections. This strategy helped Kurz lead the ÖVP to first place and to the chancellery in December 2017, after ending cooperation with the SPÖ and entering a coalition with the radical right.

The shift produced a new political conflict pattern that is now shaping party competition:

- An anti-immigration coalition between the FPÖ and ÖVP, which also shares a market-liberal approach to its economic and social policy, has increasingly converged on the right, gaining a stable parliamentary majority in the autumn 2017 elections.

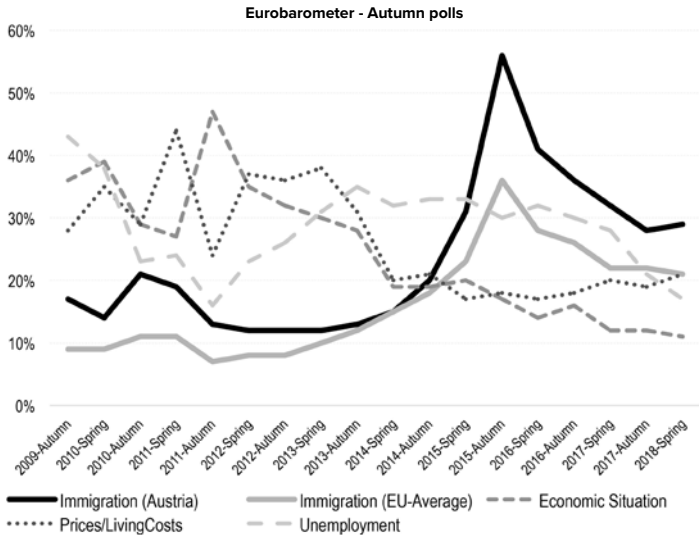
- A parliamentary opposition consisting of:
  - o a market-liberal but immigration-friendly and pro-European liberal party (NEOS);
  - o internally disintegrating Greens, who since the 2017 elections have been represented on the federal level only by one of its spin-offs, a party (JETZT) founded by former Green parliamentarian Peter Pilz;
  - o Social Democrats, who are still internally divided about the right answer to the party's longstanding immigration dilemma<sup>5</sup> but who presented a migrant programme in September 2018 (unanimously with only three abstentions from the party youth), perpetuating a mix of restrictive and liberal positions on immigration and migrant integration.

This new government/opposition division between anti-immigrant and more or less migration-friendly parties is one of the important contexts influencing the upcoming strategic choices of progressive parties in Austria. It devalues the strategic option for centre-left parties of moving further to the right, since the restrictive spectrum of policy positions on immigration is already occupied by two government parties on the right. With both JETZT and the Social Democrats still in the midst of factional disputes and the internal reorganisation of their teams, the liberal NEOS have become the most outspoken pro-immigrant party since the last election. This leaves the question as to where a progressive formula can fit in between these constraints.

*The current state of public opinion – from a progressive perspective.* Another important factor for party strategists is the state of public opinion, which confines the room for manoeuvre for progressive parties when dealing with the issue of immigration. While immigration was clearly a relevant, but not the most important, topic for Austrians prior to the 2015 events, its salience has since

dramatically increased. Despite losing some of its urgency since 2015-16, the importance of immigration and refugee politics to public opinion is still extremely high – and is actively kept salient by the governing parties. When asked about the two most important issues the country is currently facing, almost 30% of Austrians named immigration as a pressing question, and it far exceeded the next three most frequently named important issues (the economy, prices/living costs and unemployment) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** The two most important topics the country is currently facing – 2009-2018

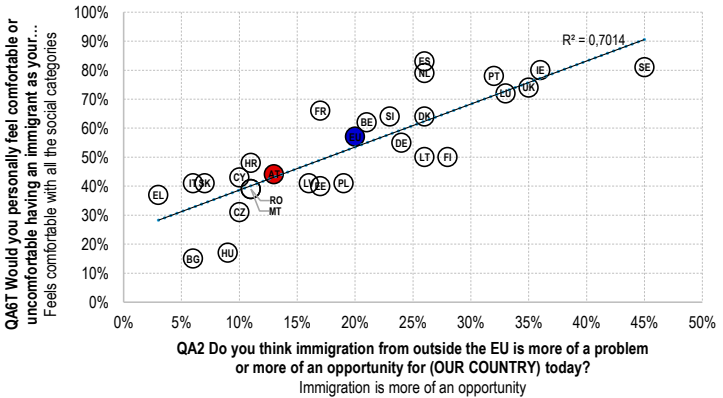


Source: European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 71-89*, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/>, 14 November 2018.

In terms of positions, the general feeling of Austrians towards immigrants from outside the EU in late 2017 was more negative (56%) than positive (38%) (EB 2017). This aversion was confirmed in a Special Eurobarometer (#469) poll on attitudes towards immigrants conducted in October 2017. Among western European countries, Austrians (together with Italians) expressed the highest scepticism when asked whether “immigration is more of a

problem or an opportunity” (only 13% of Austrians considering it an opportunity compared to 37% considering it a problem) and whether they “feel comfortable having social relations with immigrants” (only 44% of Austrians feeling comfortable with all forms of social relations, ie, at work, in the neighbourhood, in the family, etc.) (see Figure 2). Looking specifically at those respondents who express explicit discomfort, this is most pronounced when social relations are imagined with immigrants as their boss at work (35%), as a family member or partner (33%), as their doctor (27%), as a neighbour (28%), as a friend (22%) or as a colleague in the workplace (20%).

**Figure 2:** Attitudes towards immigrants, EU countries in comparison (2017)



Source: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 469*, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/>, 14 November 2018.

These recent increases in antipathy might result from several factors: above all, the refugee movements have paved the way for a more outspoken disrespect of asylum seekers and their effect on the country’s budget. Being largely held out from the labour market, asylum seekers in Austria are forced into job inactivity (apart from selected training programmes, such as language courses). This, however, is regularly portrayed by populist parties

as refugees' unwillingness to work. The same portrayal is made by tabloid media, which consider refugees a burden on the state budget and social system. What is more, the predominantly sensationalist framing of refugees as security threats (holding them responsible for petty crimes, abusive behaviour and murder) further tightens a negative perception. Since most refugee-sceptic Austrians have little personal relationship with refugees, public communication and social media portrayals become the dominant source for Austrians' impression of refugees, confirming the impact of the so-called "intergroup contact hypothesis":<sup>6</sup> ie, aversion is higher, where there is little to no contact with refugees.

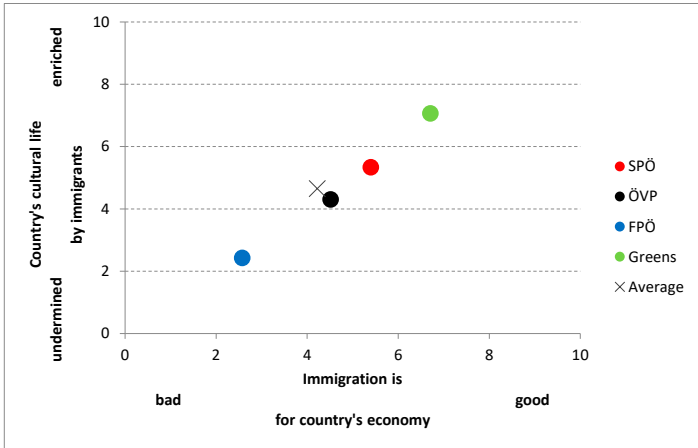
The growing role of religion is another factor in the discussion on immigration. While immigration from within the EU is mostly considered in economic terms, immigration from third countries is increasingly discussed within a 'clash of cultures' narrative, particularly with regard to the Muslim population. Even though the country has not experienced any serious terrorist activity and has a share of the Muslim population similar to other western European countries (such as Germany, France, Sweden or the UK) as well as a long-established presence of immigrants from Turkey, the more recent influx of immigrants from Middle Eastern and African Muslim countries, and the growing trans-European debate on conservative/radical Islam, have meant that sensitivity has also increased among Austrian citizens. The politicisation by political parties and the media has played a major role in hyping this debate, and has led commentators to talk of a recent 'neo-conservative' turn in Austrian public opinion and politics, which promotes values such as the preservation of traditions, an inwardness protected by stronger borders and a smaller government in social or economic relations in contrast to a stronger government in security areas.

*The challenge for catch-all-parties: A segmented electorate.* These general patterns of public opinion imply different consequences for different party-political actors. While the general tendency of public opinion might favour anti-immigrant stances (and parties),

a closer look at the motives of different groups of the electorate shows a more nuanced picture, especially from the viewpoint of progressive parties.

As the 2016 ESS demonstrates, attitudes towards immigrants are linked to different party preferences (see Figure 3). On an 11-point Likert scale (with 0 representing absolutely negative and 11 absolutely positive opinion) respondents feeling close to the SPÖ took an average position on immigrants' economic (5.4) and cultural (5.3) contribution to the country that more resembles the position of Green voters (6.7 and 7.1 respectively) than that of FPÖ voters (2.6 and 2.4 respectively). Moreover, the SPÖ featured the widest variance of positions amongst its voters (Standard-Deviation: 2.6 and 2.7 respectively), putting the party under even more pressure to seek a balanced position rather than sacrificing one group of supporters for another. Not least, when comparing those respondents who consider themselves very or quite close to the SPÖ with those who did not feel particularly close to the party, the former expressed an even more pro-immigrant stance (5.7 on economic and 5.5 on cultural contributions) than the latter (4.5 on economic and 4.8 on cultural contributions).

**Figure 3:** Attitudes to immigrants compared among Austrian voter groups



Source: European Social Survey 2016.

Note: Voter groups defined by their response to "which party they feel close to". For statistical validity, only voter groups with a sufficient number of respondents have been considered. Calculation based on unweighted data.

These patterns were strikingly confirmed by the last general election in autumn 2017 when the issue of immigration was held in varying order of priority by the various groups of party supporters. According to exit polls, prior to the election the issue of immigration was frequently discussed by 96% of FPÖ voters, by 85% of ÖVP voters, but only by 76% of SPÖ voters.<sup>7</sup>

Those who voted for the centre-left did so much less because of its stance on immigration than those who voted for the right. For centre-left parties this means that abandoning progressive stances in order to re-attract voters lost to the populist radical right bares the risk of alienating moderate centre-left voters or even more so active progressives on the left.

A look at voter transition in the 2017 election proves the above-mentioned dilemma. In the election campaign, the centre-left SPÖ was

running with a more balanced position on immigration (called “immigration with a sense of proportion”) including more effective European border control, proactive development policy in cooperation with Africa, a European asylum system based on solidarity, increased repatriation if possible and targeted information campaigns in/with countries of origin (see SPÖ election manifesto 2017) than its markedly anti-immigrant opponents on the right. With this electoral strategy, the SPÖ was able to attract more support from both former Green voters (about 161,000) and from former non-voters (about 156,000) than it lost voters to the FPÖ (about 155,000).<sup>8</sup>

This underlines that – leaving aside the ideological debates on immigration within the centre-left – even from a merely strategic point of view the gains of a restrictive shift might be quite limited compared to the potential losses. The gains are, in fact, also highly dependent on the remaining political parties being alternative options for potential centre-left voters. Without the pressure from a left-wing opponent (such as the Greens), a centre-left party (such as the SPÖ) clearly enjoys more freedom to adapt its positions since its location in the party spectrum is less confined. It can try to take over some of the traditional positions of its former left-wing opponents in order to lure them away to the centre-left, yet it can also shift its profile further to the right and still remain the most eligible party for voters on the left (who are then confronted with the choice of either voting for Social Democrats or voting for pro-immigrant but economically liberal parties – or, possibly, not voting at all).

*The role of the election type – first versus second order elections.*

A final, but equally crucial point is the type of election for which electoral strategies are designed. Many of the above-mentioned arguments are based on the conditions for first order elections on the national level. However, among scholars of party politics there is broad consensus that the European Parliament (EP) elections need to be considered as second order elections in most countries. This, however, forces national parties to take other factors into stronger consideration when designing their EP campaign strategy.



Firstly, voter turnout is usually lower in second order elections than in national elections – thus, mobilisation costs are higher and less promising than those in first order elections. However, if invested, they can lead to above-average shares of the available mandates compared to first order elections (due to the lower turnout of voters in second order elections). Secondly, the decisive cleavages for those who actually do vote in European elections are slightly different from those in national elections, putting a party's stance on the EU into stronger focus. Thirdly, EP-campaigns in domestic policy arenas need to be in line (at least to a certain degree) with the European party group's overall campaign strategy, or else the European party group loses credibility with voters and the media.

Taking these three factors into account, progressive parties should – collectively – use the EP elections as a test run for the relaunch of a more pronounced party profile that distinguishes progressive parties more clearly from the reactionary *Zeitgeist* that has pushed the traditional left out of many European governments.

### **Where to go from here? Strategies for progressive parties on immigration policy**

The patterns set out above raise the question of how to move forward as a progressive party. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from these findings:

1. *Weigh up your goals: Votes, office or progressive key values?* As politics is the art and profession of gaining power, the pros and cons of strategies need to be weighed up carefully by any political party: is the goal to maximise votes, is it government-participation (even at the risk of losing votes and entering unpleasant coalitions) or does sticking to the party's core positions and ideological authenticity top any other consideration? Naturally, all of these goals usually play together all at once, so it is a question of emphasis rather than of absoluteness.<sup>9</sup>

To answer this question, issue ownership plays a key role. As shown, the median position of the Austrian population on immigration currently gravitates to the right. However, engaging in open competition over the most restrictive position on immigration rather helps boost the prominence of positions that are already owned by government parties and where Social Democrats can hardly become more restrictive than the right-wing parties already are (or are willing to top even further). Even from a purely vote-centred perspective, it thus appears doubtful whether a massive shift to the right would pay dividends at the ballot – if at all, then the dividends would rather be for the centre-right than for the centre-left.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, the same is currently true for a strong shift to the left, as it would risk losing further votes among the remaining migrant-sceptic blue-collar base and senior supporters (who, however, are usually less inclined to participate in second order elections). Yet, if a topic's current salience – such as that of immigration – also takes off the table the option of depoliticisation (which has not proved to be electorally successful either), the more natural response for an opposition party competing with an already restrictive government coalition would be a liberal or – in the case of a centre-left party – a pragmatic counter-position.

Such a position, however, would need to be politicised actively – not passively – as the 'moderate alternative' to the restrictive turn of a radicalising European right-wing coalition.<sup>11</sup> This would also mean positioning Social Democracy as the main protector against ideas of illiberal democracy and those who serve as their backers. Moreover, this position would be more in line with the progressive core beliefs of the (Austrian) Social Democratic party, despite its long history of anti-immigrant traces, and would thus sharpen the Social Democratic profile at a time when many observers and even supporters have lost a clear understanding of what 21st century Social Democracy really stands for. Ultimately, however,

this would sacrifice coalition considerations with the far right and its equally anti-immigrant and anti-European approach.<sup>12</sup>

2. *Reframe the immigration and integration issue.* The current right-wing push towards renationalisation and protectionism, its questioning of internal free movement, together with its continuous reluctance to increase development aid resources/programmes, are the antithesis against which a progressive response needs to paint a positive alternative. This alternative narrative for immigration could include the following pillars:

- *A harmonised concept of controlled, legal options for immigration to Europe.* As presented by the European Commission in September 2018, the pathways for legal migration to Europe need to be harmonised among member states. Without a concerted regime of legal migration to a Union that (until now) considers free movement of people as much a value as the movement of goods, a) nationalist egoisms will further continue to grow and tear the European compromise apart and b) third-country nationals will continue to take the most dangerous risks to their life in order to arrive at Europe's borders anyway.
- *Stronger European presence in the regions of emigration.* The European Union and its member states will have to consider a stronger presence in those areas of the world that are the main sources of immigration but that are caught in the geopolitical power struggle between the US, Russia, China and various regional hegemons. Although Brexit delivers a blow to the EU's capacity for global engagement, it is crucial to move from a reactive to a proactive strategy if Europe wants to be on the controlling end of global migration flows. Concerted (instead of bilateral) agreements for serious European investments in Africa and Asia are necessary to reduce the factors of

emigration (such as economic deprivation, ecological burden, etc.). As with Europe's post-war reconstruction, there is no alternative to implementing an honest Marshall Plan for Africa, focusing on the establishment of stability and basic wealth instead of the exploitation of African resources for non-African profits.

- *Integration as 'participation in diversity'*. From a progressive perspective there is only one humanist answer to the diversity that is shaping the mobile society of today: respecting 'diversity as normality and an asset of society (both across the EU and within EU member states) and recalling that the elimination of diversity has always come at the price of violence, and conflict with human rights. Any form of politically associated population (demos) of course needs agreements on certain common denominators, and for progressives one of these has to be 'participation'. Diversity must not therefore imply a mere coexistence of different groups side by side (which is one of the main sources of contemporary alienation) but requires active participation in core societal institutions, social-liberal values and the social networks of the new home country. This claim, however, needs to be directed at ALL members of society, at those with a long domestic family history as well as at those who are currently immigrating. This form of mutual encounter in diversity of course has to be learned, promoted and moderated – it rarely grows by itself. Diversity mainstreaming is thus a crucial task for all political sectors (education, workplace, bureaucracy, media, etc.).
3. *Reinforce the core principles*. Forging a new progressive formula first and foremost needs to *re-establish the traditional 'unique selling point (USP)'* of the progressive party family. As shown, progressive centre-left parties do not naturally possess ownership of the immigration issue. Any response to questions of immigration will therefore only be perceived

as an authentic position if it is in accordance with the party's core issues and positions – ie, labour interests.<sup>13</sup> As long as there is (legitimate) doubt among working-class voters that PES politics will credibly protect them from the (economic, social, etc.) disadvantages of a neoliberal, globalised world, their turn towards nationalist parties and identity politics will continue, and any form of progressive position will be perceived as a betrayal of the party's core principles. More specifically, it is important to highlight the connection much more strongly between migration on the one hand, and the rising global injustice catalysed by a neoliberal global economy on the other – in other words, the material roots for global migration patterns.<sup>14</sup>

4. *Europeanise progressive claims.* The current opportunity structure for progressive parties at the European level is shaped a) by a growing populist radical right power that is anti-integrationist both with regard to the EU as well as to immigration, b) by a centre-right whose internal debate between moderate (Christian-social) and restrictive (neo-conservative) forces increasingly deprives it from its former role as one of the most pro-European party families (at least in Austria), c) by a liberal party family that shares many progressive stances on a socio-cultural level but envisages a completely different, neo-liberal, form of European Integration, and d) by an economically and socio-culturally progressive Green party family that – at least in Austria – appears to be as much worn down by the contemporary right-wing hegemony as Social Democrats. This provides the window for a radical pro-European push for stronger harmonisation in policy areas such as social and welfare systems, finance, etc. Indeed this appears to be the only plausible and credible position for the progressive centre-left that can be occupied in a positive (not defensive) way. Being on the decline both on national and European levels allows centre-left parties finally to relieve themselves from

backing the consequences of globalised neo-liberalism, and to sharpen their profile as the inter- and supranational (not merely national) protector of workers' rights (after all it was Socialism that promoted the idea of an International) and to depict the European Union as a vehicle (not an obstacle) to these goals. A strong pro-European perspective is no longer owned by the centre-right alone, which gives room for a stronger reframing of the European integration project, especially considering that renationalisation would further weaken Europe's position in global economic competition with the US, China, Russia, etc.

5. *Actively portray the consequences of a reactionary turn.* In the context of the European Parliament election, a progressive formula needs to emphasise the historic parallels between current political development and the early 20th century (to which the creation of the European Union has been an explicit response). The explicit goal of the rising radical right to gradually weaken European compromise in favour of national self-interest was the formula for two world wars. Indeed, this national self-interest catalyses competition between nations instead of cooperation with each other for the greater good. At a time when global political and economic unities are increasing, nationalism suggests a return to small and narrow units. However, almost all of today's pressing problems (climate change, migration, social inequality, radicalisation, etc.) are challenges that can be met only with a transnational, joint effort, not with a competitive approach. Yet, since domestic politicians are democratically accountable only to their own constituency, they are intrinsically motivated to favour their own interests over those of the whole. If this self-centric tendency of nation state politics merges with a populist, anti-intellectual party rhetoric that is also willing to sacrifice the long-term for the short-term profit, then the post-war stability in western Europe (and later in eastern Europe) could become increasingly endangered.

## Conclusion

Various European democracies are currently experiencing a hegemony shift to the right regarding the question of immigration and migrant integration. This obviously puts progressive parties in a difficult strategic position, as they appear to be swimming upstream against the current trend in public opinion. It has led many within the centre-left spectrum across Europe to consider a departure from key progressive claims in order to catch up with the momentum-swing that has cost them at recent elections. In this regard, Austria provides a very interesting example because the strategic dilemma for the centre-left has haunted Austria's centre-left Social Democrats for over three decades but has now caught up with the party to the full extent.

It is against this background that this chapter has analysed the current conditions for progressive Social Democrats on the centre-left in Austria when confronted with the issue of immigration. It has also considered the strategic options of response, and has shown that in light of a right-wing coalition establishing a new hegemony and colonising the restrictive spectrum on immigration, there is little to gain for centre-lefts from chasing this trend – especially since among their current voter base the issue of immigration is less important and more positively regarded than it is among the conservative or far right electorate (as demonstrated by opinion polls). Conversely, although committing to a more liberal approach might be the ideologically more authentic progressive option, this would clash with the protectionist blue-collar factions within the centre-left – a segment in which the Austrian Social Democrats have lost the most voters in recent decades.

What remains in the short term is the focus on a pragmatic position that needs to be actively politicised as the moderate alternative to a radicalising right-wing approach. This is the price for the traditional claim of being a mainstream party that aims to catch diverse voter segments and integrate conflicting interests. As long as this

claim shows the courage to pursue a proactive progressive stance on cultural issues and diversity, a moderate alternative approach – including better legal pathways for immigration, a more proactive European foreign policy and a participatory yet demanding concept of integration – is the only viable short-term answer that will not tear the party apart. In the long term, however, the main goal for a progressive party has to be the redirection of public opinion towards a forward- not backward-oriented perception of diversity and mixed society in a globalised world.

However, as other recent examples – in Austria and beyond – have shown, electoral success is not only a result of strategic positions on sensitive policy choices, but also a question of candidates' personal appeal and authenticity regarding the messages presented. Apart from all strategic decisions on issues, what is imperative is a rejuvenation of the image of a set and immobile party run by old officials and the creation, instead, of an authentic combination of candidate and message that is able to be a convincing alternative for voters. Ultimately, as long as there is (legitimate) doubt among voters that the centre-left is successfully going to protect them from the downside of neoliberalism, it does not even matter which approach to immigration the party is taking. The need for a renewal is therefore obvious – and this awareness becoming prevalent in the party will decide the fate of Social Democracy's progressive heritage – and of the party family as a whole – in the years to come.



## Notes

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- 12 To qualify: If the priority is joining majority-coalitions, in electoral systems with proportional representation other strategies would gain more plausibility, depending on the coalition options. In Austria's party system, only once in the post-war-era has there been a viable majority on the left (ie, in the Social Democrats' absolute majority rule from 1971 to 1983, under the very specific and bygone conditions of a two-and-a-half-party-system). From a coalition perspective, this has forced Austrian Social Democrats into repeated grand coalitions with the centre-right (see: W. C. Müller, *Zur (angeblichen) Alternativlosigkeit der großen Koalition in Österreich: koalitionstheoretische und politisch-historische Perspektiven*, in F. Schausberger, *Festschrift für Robert Kriechbaumer*, Vienna 2008, pp. 301-324) and fuelled the internal debate over opening up to the radical right in order to increase coalition options (see: O. Gruber, *The centre-left and migration in Austria*, in E. Stetter, T. Boros, "The Flexible Solidarity". *How Progressive Parties handled the Migration Crisis in Central Europe*, Brussels 2017, pp. 11-30). In such a setting, shifting further to the right could make short-term sense even if it meant abandoning progressive core principles and losing votes on the party's left flank. On the one hand, it would allow a second coalition option with the radical right. On the other hand, it could increase majorities from a centre-to-left coalition if other parties succeeded in filling the void left by the SPÖ. Whether the party would survive such a tensile test, whether the radical-right indeed would prefer non-proximal coalitions with the centre-left over those with the centre-right, and whether leftist parties would indeed enter coalitions with a more restrictive Social Democracy are big questions in considering whether this move is viable. In a European electoral setting, considerations for Social Democrats obviously look different, as cooperation with the radical-right party group in the EP is not a serious option for most European parliamentary groups. The consideration of progressives would rather then need to focus on other potential alliances, thus making the progressives more independent from coalition pressures and free to focus on electorally successful winning formulas.
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# Immigration policies and electoral behaviour in Italy

LUIGI TROIANI

The March 2018 parliamentary election gave Italy the first fully-fledged populist government in western Europe. During the campaign both the Five Star Movement (M5S) and the League, led respectively by Luigi Di Maio and Matteo Salvini, future allies in government, singled out the centre left government's policies on immigration as one of the targets to win people's vote. They succeeded.

The current government is reversing the previous Italian immigration policy. In September 2018, it approved the so-called "security decree" ensuring a stricter juridical framework for immigrants and asylum seekers. It abolished the humanitarian residence permit, and set new limits for the acquisition of citizenship and for the functioning of reception centres.

The interior minister, Matteo Salvini, had already adopted severe measures to seal Italy's southern borders, making it almost impossible for seekers of asylum and international protection to land in Italian ports. In the first nine months of 2018 more than 34,000 people landed in Spain and more than 22,000 in Greece. Only a few more than 21,000 people reached Italy by sea, 81% fewer than the number reached for the same period in 2017.

This reduction in numbers is also the effect of the agreements signed in 2017 between Italy and the Libyan Government of National Accord. Italian patrol boats and financial resources were assigned to the Libyan coastguard to ensure it intercepts those seeking to reach Europe at sea. At the same time, limits were imposed on the search and rescue activities of the Italian coastguard and international NGOs.<sup>1</sup> One of the consequences is that the number of people dying while trying to cross the Mediterranean has increased.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1,728 migrants died in the Mediterranean between January and September 2018: 1,260 of them while trying to reach Italy. Those who survived were taken by the Libyans to their harsh detention centres.

## **The Italian legal framework**

During the first 120 years of its existence, Italy produced 29 million emigrants. Despite the large number of returns, from 1861 until 1980, the years considered by National Statistics as the historical Italian migration period, the balance of Italian migrants was -18,761,000. Even though Italy became an immigration country in the following four decades, the current number of Italian emigrants stands at 5,114,000,<sup>2</sup> a number which seems to be very similar to that of foreigners living in Italy, 5,144,000. According to the OECD's International Migration Outlook 2017, the country is the only G7 member to be on the list of the top ten sources of migration to OECD countries.<sup>3</sup>

When immigration became an issue, Italians were not yet ready for the consequences that were going to unfold from losing their country's 'emigration only' label.

Suddenly, on a cultural, political and administrative level, Italy had to 'invent' itself as an immigration country. The first national law dealing with immigrants, the so-called Martelli Law (law no. 39, 28 February 1990) named after the then socialist interior minister, appeared in February 1990, as essentially an emergency law aimed at governing the flux of immigrants<sup>4</sup> generated mostly by the collapsing communist system in central and eastern Europe. Two other laws went on to complete the Italian legal framework for immigration and asylum seekers. On 6 March 1998, the so-called Turco-Napolitano Law was approved to govern immigration after the emergency measures of the previous legislation.

In July 2002, the Bossi-Fini Law modified the Turco-Napolitano Law. This new law, promoted by the centre-right government led by Silvio Berlusconi, on the one hand provided rights to health, education and welfare, and to family reunification for regular migrants (while a decree regularised the position of immigrant workers employed as domestic workers and caregivers), and on the other hand introduced entry quotas and criminal sanctions for irregular migrants. The law punished those entering the country without a due permit and a job contract through measures like expulsion after being escorted to the Italian border, permission to reside only after obtaining an effective job contract, repression of immigrant smugglers and traffickers by means that included the Italian Navy. The rules were very strict, setting the conditions for more irregular immigration.

None of the three laws dealing with immigrants dealt in depth with asylum rights. At the same time, the three laws established one of Europe's most restrictive legal frameworks on migration, as confirmed by the multiplicity of cases at the European Court of Justice and at the Council of Europe.

There is particular criticism of the following rules:

- residence permits are granted only to immigrants with a work contract that is in force, with the obligation to be fingerprinted;
- immigrants without a residence permit holding ID or a passport (ie, irregular immigrants) will be escorted to the frontier and expelled;
- immigrants without identity papers will be forced to stay for up to two months in Centres for Identification and Expulsion;
- foreigners who have been expelled and return to Italy without a residence permit, commit a crime and will be detained.

The above-mentioned laws allowed the refusal of entry into the

country in extraterritorial waters, in accordance with bilateral agreements defining cooperation between police forces to fight human trafficking. In practice the procedure is open to abuse, as it may prevent the protection of asylum seekers and refugees, in violation of international and EU laws. Moreover, under these Italian laws, many citizens have been and are being charged for abetting irregular immigration, even though they acted in accordance with the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR).

### **How immigration became a key issue in Italian politics**

During the present decade, the centre left governments<sup>5</sup> have not substantially modified the rules described above, despite these governments being confronted with cycles of unexpected waves of refugees from theatres of war, which produced a large number of foreigners entering the country in irregular conditions. While economic<sup>6</sup> immigration has diminished since 2013 (see Table 1), the areas suffering the consequences of wars generated uncontrolled landings at Sicilian and other Southern Italian coastal areas. To prevent death at sea, NGOs and the Italian coastguard have carried out wide search and rescue operations along the Central Mediterranean route.

It is important to note that while a remarkable share of Italian public opinion has accepted immigrants with jobs, families and residence permits, the flux of 'new' foreigners arriving through the Mediterranean is viewed with concern.

**Table 1:** Inflows of permanent immigrants to Italy, 2007-2015

2007	571,900
2008	490,400
2009	390,300
2010	355,700
2011	317,300
2012	274,400
2013	251,400
2014	204,100
2015	160,900

Source: OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2017*, p. 17.

Table 2 shows that the applications of asylum seekers in Italy grew remarkably between 2014 and 2016. Within the EU only Germany received more applications.

**Table 2:** Asylum seeker applications in the European Union, top seven countries, 2012-2016

	2012-2014 (average)	2015	2016	Countries of origin (top 3)
<b>Germany</b>	<b>115,540</b>	441,900	<b>722,360</b>	Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq
<b>Italy</b>	<b>35,370</b>	83,240	<b>122,120</b>	Nigeria, Pakistan, Gambia
France	58,040	74,300	77,890	Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti
Austria	20,000	85,620	39,950	Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq
UK	29,550	39,970	38,380	Iran, Pakistan, Iraq
Hungary	20,550	174,430	28,070	Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan

Source: OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2017*, p. 29.

In 2018 the number of immigrants residing in Italy stabilised at about 8.5% of the total population. At the end of 2017 there were 5,144,000 foreign residents, in absolute numbers about five times the number of foreigners living in Italy 25 years before and 97,000 more than in 2016. Foreign residents come from almost 200 different countries, half of them from another European country,



30% from within the European Union. There are about 1 million Africans, and a few less Asians. About 370,000 Americans reside in Italy, the very large majority of them from Latin America (6.9% of the total).

### **Lack of listening by government, wrong perception in public opinion**

As mentioned above, the centre left governments did not remove the strict legal conditions that in fact are pushing immigrants to search for illegal entrance. At the same time, these governments kept Italy open to refugees and asylum seekers, in compliance with Italy's international obligations. These two facts together spawned the Italian electorate's broad rejection of government immigration policies and its popular support for the anti-immigration approach of the present governments. The latter, in particular, can be better understood in the light of three elements, which also explain the motivations behind the electorate's enthusiastic support for Matteo Salvini's rigid refusal of entry to refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>7</sup>

The first element is that the Italian electorate, rightly or wrongly, felt that Renzi's government had failed to manage the issue of immigration appropriately: in those years, in fact, Italian opinion on migration and immigrants became increasingly negative (more so than the European average) as shown by the data below (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** Italian and EU perception of immigration, 2017: three cases

"Immigrants make the criminality pressure worsen"			
	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
EU 28	57%	35.7%	7.3%
Italy	74%	21.3%	4.8%
"Immigrants steal the jobs of our workers" <sup>8</sup>			
	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
EU 28	40.9%	55.1%	4%
Italy	58%	37.9%	4.1%
"Immigrants are a burden on our welfare"			
	I agree	I disagree	I don't know
EU 28	59%	35.4%	5.6%
Italy	62%	30.2%	7.8%

Source: Istituto Cattaneo and Eurobarometer no. 28080 (EU); no. 1025 (Italy).

Through the action of the interior minister, Marco Minniti, the centre left government led by Paolo Gentiloni adopted measures to reduce migrants' entry to Italy (see Table 4). Despite these measures, according to the UNHCR and IOM, in 2017 64% of the 172,000 migrants arriving in Europe by sea nevertheless landed in Italy.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 4:** Landing of immigrants in Italy, 2016-2018 (first semester)

	Term	Absolute numbers	Variation with respect to the same semester of the previous year
2017	First semester	79,154	+36.3%
2018	First semester	16,566	-79.07%

Source: Ministry of Interior of Italy.

In relation to public opinion and voters' intent, the Democrats' new approach to migration came too late. At the end of October 2017, research showed that, from 2014 to date, the fear of immigration

doubled among voters and activists of the Democratic Party and M5S, respectively from 10% to 20% and from 17% to 34%, while League supporters' fear rose from 17% to 72%.<sup>10</sup>

The second element relates to the fact that the centre left governments, with few exceptions, failed to make the link clear between the flows of economic immigrants and economic cycles. The need to restore legal migration paths and promote immigration in relation to the availability of regular jobs was not acknowledged, despite the fact that increasing legal channels would have restricted illegality and the trafficking of humans through the Mediterranean.

The third element shows that the Italian centre left governments were perceived by Italian public opinion as being unable to receive solidarity from the majority of EU member countries and the European Commission. The confrontation between the Commission and some member states with regard to the relocation of refugees was not enough to convince an important share of Italian voters that the centre left governments were being heard in Brussels. On the one hand, the European Union appeared unable to turn the continuous arrivals of people in need of help on the Italian shores into a European issue; and on the other hand, the Italian centre left governments seemed unable to convince partners and the Commission of the need to have an active European policy of redistribution together with revision of the Dublin regulation.

Last but not least, the centre left seemed incapable of perceiving how big and soaring popular discontent was over its immigration policy. The climax of this misperception was evident when, on the eve of the campaign for the 2018 political election, the Democratic Party proposed to Parliament to amend the law on the so-called *ius sanguinis*.<sup>11</sup> Experienced leadership never raises controversial issues when the vote is near. It was a strategic mistake for the Democratic Party to commit to such a controversial issue right

before the national elections – a mistake that played into the hands of the populist parties.

The ‘scale’ of the phenomenon also mattered. In fact, any phenomenon is acceptable up to a certain limit. As for the immigrants entering Italy, the negative perception of the scale of immigration started in 2007 and grew during the long decade of social and economic crisis. It exploded after 2014, when the M5S opposition to the government and to the Democratic Party also took advantage of its ability to mobilise consensus through the web.<sup>12</sup>

Scale operated as a twofold factor, the real and perceived figures. In 2007 Italy registered 571,900 immigrants, after which there was a deceleration in following years (490,400 in 2008; 390,300 in 2009; below 300,000 from 2012, and below 200,000 from 2015).<sup>13</sup> The deceleration was not recognised and, in the people’s perception, the scale of immigration continued to be as high as in 2007 and in 2008. The flow of refugees and people claiming international protection was perceived as a surge of continuous dramatic arrivals from the Mediterranean, which, in four years, reached a total of 625,000 people, but which in fact was continuously decelerating.

A specific scale effect came from the reaction to the increasing number of two groups of immigrants considered by the prejudice of common people as ‘sensitive’: Muslims and blacks. Every 20 years, the number of Muslims entering Italy has practically doubled: 858,000 in 1990, 1,583,000 in 2010 and 3,199,000 in 2030 (the last is the projection of the Pew Institute, 2011). At present, foreigners of Islamic religion number 1,683,000 (ie, 32.7% of total immigrants). The percentage of Black Africans tripled in each of the last three decades of the 20th century: from 3.3% in 1970 to 10% in 1980, and 30.5% in 1990, to remain stable at a little over 20% after the turn of the new century. Opinion polls, however, showed that these figures were perceived as being higher than in reality.

The scale effect contributed to generating a wrong perception about immigrants and gave the nationalistic populist parties an additional weapon to cash the effect of discontent at the election. Before the international immigration upsurge, Italy had experienced similar trends in the public opinion of northern regions affected by internal migration from southern Italy. The manipulation of local public opinion and voters against immigrants from southern Italy made the Northern League party locally strong, and it then built its power on this issue in northern Italy. The paradox is that Italian nationalistic populism cashed consensus on its immigration menu in 2018, after five consecutive years of stable numbers of immigrants.

### **Perception and reality of Italian immigration**

Voters express their preferences on the basis of their beliefs, which do not necessarily reflect the reality or the truth of a phenomenon. The Italian perception of migration and asylum seekers is certainly wrong for at least four reasons. In quantitative terms, the true number of immigrants is much lower than the common people perceive. In dynamic terms, the number of immigrants has been stable for the last five years.

In structural terms, the number of immigrants produces positive effects and shows a positive trend with regard to the future. Italian citizens are getting older (one-quarter of the population is over 65) and have fewer children than foreigners (1.27 children per fertile Italian woman against 1.97 per fertile foreign woman). In refusing the present level of immigrants, in 30 years' time Italy may become a country of less than 47 million people, with an average age of 49. Without the contribution of foreigners, Italy will lose population even in the most optimistic forecast: in 2050 it will have a population of less than 55 million. In this scenario, the south will suffer particularly: the decrease in population and climate change will be pushing this part of Italy to a concrete risk of depopulation and distress. In Table 5 the positive effects of immigrants' contribution to the Italian demography is evident.

**Table 5:** Population growth in Italy with and without immigrants (in millions), 2006-2050

	2006	2050		
		highest value hypothesis (hs, superior)	average value hypothesis (hm, median)	lowest value hypothesis (hi, inferior) <sup>14</sup>
Italians and foreigners	59.1	67.3	61.6	55.6
of whom, Italians	56.2	54.9	50.9	46.7
of whom, foreigners	2,939	12.4	10.7	9
	2006	2050 (hs)		
15-64 years old	39 (or 66% of the total)	35.8 (or 53.2% of the total)		
Over 65 years old	11.8	22.2		
Average age	42.8	48.9		

Source: Caritas and Migrantes, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione*, 2017.

The majority of immigrants live in conditions of integration and legality. The number of holders of non-EU residence permits is high, 3,715,000, which is an explicit sign of their willingness to stay, and possibly of their desire to be integrated and for legality. Moreover two-thirds of them, 2,390,000, hold a permanent residence permit, which is evidence of settlement and a long-term relationship with the country where they live. The rest, 1,325,000, have a fixed-term permit based on family (39.3%) or work (35.2%).

Less than one-fifth (239,000, one in every 16 non-EU immigrants) is an asylum or protection permit holder.

The fact that the populist and rightist opposition to the Democratic Party government successfully took advantage of the migration issue despite the above-mentioned elements clearly shows that perception counted more than reality.

Using the previously mentioned Eurostat data and polls conducted at the end of 2017, the Istituto Cattaneo published research on

the impact of immigration on Italian public opinion and the electorate.<sup>15</sup> The question put to those interviewed dealt, among other issues, with their knowledge of the percentage of immigrants<sup>16</sup> in the Italian population. While, at the end of 2017, immigrants made up 7.2% of the total EU population, the average European citizen believed that they represented 16.7% of the total population. Italians, with an astonishing 25%, are the least well informed. Even though the percentage of immigrants in Italy is less than the EU average, 7%, Italians think that one-quarter of the population is composed of people born outside EU, a deviation from the reality of +17.4%.

## **Recommendations**

The first recommendation to the Italian progressive forces is that they should re-establish the truth in national public opinion of the numbers relating to immigration.

The second argument that progressives should use to rectify the judgement on how they handled the migration issue is that Italy needs immigrants to guarantee the demographic equilibrium necessary for a working and productive country.

The third recommendation has its roots in the sociological analysis of the nature of the Italian culture and electorate. Following the indications of the Pew Research Centre's NIM index,<sup>17</sup> the Istituto Cattaneo reports that Italy appears to be the most nationalistic country among the 15 western European states under scrutiny, adding that part of the wrong perception of immigrants and asylum seekers was irrationally generated by Italian nationalism and an "instinctive" rejection of religious and ethnic minorities. Progressive forces should also note what the Istituto Cattaneo's research highlighted in the Italian left versus right perception of immigration: the former declared a percentage of immigrants equal to 18.5%, the latter equal to 32.4%. Progressive forces should launch a long-term campaign to fight Italians' deep prej-

udice against the ‘different’, remaining vigilant with regard to resurging nationalism. The quantitative perception of immigrants in the rightist ranks (four times the truth) suggests that the political offensive of progressive forces against the right now in government has to be strong, as the rightist position is based on evident emotional and ideological faults.

The fourth recommendation is that the dialogue progressive forces need to open with Italian society on immigration should be multifaceted. This is based on the fact that, in accordance with the previously mentioned research of the Istituto Cattaneo, the quantitative and qualitative perception of immigrants varies in relation to factors such as the level of education, social and work conditions, and regional environments. The gulf between the real and perceived level of immigration widens from graduates (+10.9%) to secondary school diploma holders (+18.6%) to the citizens with only compulsory schooling (+21.1%). As for work and social conditions, the gulf widens from +12.3% in the upper classes to 13% in the middle class, to 14.8% among small entrepreneurs, to 21.4% among skilled workers and 21.8% among non-skilled workers. As for the regional perception, the gulf is 14.2% in the north-west of Italy and 13.1% in the north-east, whereas it is +18.9% in the centre and 20.5% in the southern regions.

The strategy of the progressive forces, in terms of content and language, needs to be tailored differently, taking account of the above segmentation of the electorate. The exercise needs special application for the so-called ‘red regions’ – ie, the regions that traditionally expressed support for the Communist and Socialist parties (Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Marche, Umbria). In the Istituto Cattaneo/Eurobarometer analysis, the red regions recorded the largest gulf between real and perceived immigration, with a surprising +20.9%. This means that the inhabitants of these regions believed that Italy was experiencing four times more immigration than in reality, which certainly contributed to their refusal to vote for the Democratic Party in March 2018.



As a general conclusion, it seems that the idealism of the left should be moderated with a due sense of realism. A better understanding of common people's opinion, feelings and needs has to be part of a progressive strategy. The issue of immigration and international protection of people in need should be illustrated through a bottom-up process involving people and their interest: for instance, the demographic evolution of the country, the segmentation of the labour market, the positive influence of immigrants on the public accounts and pension schemes are good arguments to be advanced.

The enforcement of law and order does not run counter to a 'just' policy on immigrants. The repression of criminal activities committed by immigrants and asylum seekers and by those exploiting their needs is an obvious part of a progressive agenda on migration.

No Italian in need should feel abandoned by a state helping a foreigner in need: this is part of the discourse on identity, which the nationalistic populist forces are using and which the left must not leave in their hands. To prevent the feeling of abandonment that a number of Italian citizens are experiencing, progressive forces should promote policies that target vulnerable people in general, irrespective of their status, with the aim of fostering inclusion and preventing inequalities.

There are things that are not negotiable. Italian civil and military vessels must save people in danger when they are in territorial waters. After a reasonable period, the rights of citizenship must be granted to immigrants and their children who have demonstrated respect for the constitution and Italian laws, and who want to become Italians. Exploitation of immigrants is unacceptable: criminal organisations and business activities taking illicit advantage of desperate immigrated people must be eradicated. The legal labour market for foreigners should be reopened as much as possible. Salaries and social rights should not be subject to discrimination.

The information given by the Istituto Cattaneo and Eurobarometer provides the very unfortunate proof that Italians share the highest European rejection of minorities in terms of prejudice, cultivating an instinctive hatred for immigrants. An appropriate communication strategy needs to be tailored: a more 'simple' language is needed, distances between leaders and people have to be cut, absolute consistency between public speech and private behaviour needs to be reached, an inclusive definition of national identity needs to be proposed. The latter should include the enlargement of integration policies to anyone residing on the national territory. As the first necessary step for any project of inclusion, job creation should be part of those policies, with reference to the need for both nationals and foreigners.

## Notes

- 1 Information comes from Idos, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2018*, October 2018, which is also the source for other last-minute data in the text. Dossier states that, according to the IOM, “since 2000, out of the 40,000 migrants who died at sea throughout the world, those who died on the route between Italy and Libya were as many as 22,400”, p. 12.
- 2 According to Fondazione Migrantes, *Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo 2018*, 2018, Italian emigrants number 5,114,469: 16% of them in Argentina, 14.5% in Germany, 12% in Switzerland, 8.1% in Brazil, 8% in France.
- 3 The OECD Outlook 2017 states that between 2005 and 2014, the average annual number of emigrants from Italy to OECD countries was 87,000 (ranking 8th after China, Romania, Poland, India, Mexico, Philippines, Vietnam). The emigrants to OECD countries from Italy numbered 154,000 in 2014 and 171,000 in 2015. According to National Statistics, there were about 115,000 Italians who emigrated in 2017. During the same year, Italian expatriates registered at AIRE (the State register of Italian residents abroad) numbered 128,193. See also ISTAT, *Rapporto BES 2017*, [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/12/Bes\\_2017.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/12/Bes_2017.pdf).
- 4 According to Migrantes, *Dossier Statistico 1992*, p. 53, from 1986 until 1991, the presence of immigrants in Italy increased from 450,227 to 859,571.
- 5 Here the definition ‘centre left’ rather than ‘centre-left’ has been chosen on purpose to underline the composition of the governments that came in succession from 2013 to June 2018, and that were formed by coalitions between the Democratic Party (centre-left) and other centre or centre-right parties. The three governments to which the text refers were the Letta government: April 2013 – February 2014; Renzi government: February 2014-December 2016; and Gentiloni government: December 2016- June 2018.
- 6 The source of the data in Table 1 is the OECD and, in accordance with OECD methodology, the data refer only to regular entries.
- 7 On 10 November 2018, Italian newspaper La Repubblica published a poll conducted by Demos&Pi on 29-31 October regarding the position of Italian public opinion on the ships with immigrants and refugees wishing to dock in Italian ports. 52% were for refusal (44% in 2017), 40% for reception (49% in 2017). The refusal was approved by 84% of the League supporters, 66% of M5S and 16% of Democratic Party supporters.
- 8 In this respect it is interesting what IDOS, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2018* writes, p. 12: “(...) of the 2,423,000 foreign workers in 2017, as many as two-thirds carry out low-skilled professions or blue-collar jobs (...). In particular 71% of domestic workers and carers are foreigners (a sector that employs 43.2% of foreign women workers) as are almost half of all street vendors, more than one-third of porters, 18.5% of workers in hotels and restaurants (mostly cleaners and waiters), one-sixth of all construction workers and farmers. Those jobs are usually hard, precarious, low paid and often seasonal, with little or no contractual guarantees and sometimes with exploitation, and are therefore unattractive to Italians. In addition, the low occupational mobility of foreign workers leads them to a subordinate condition, which is reflected in the pay gap: on average, an Italian employee earns 25.5% more than a foreigner, while foreign women earn on average 25.4% less than their male counterparts”.
- 9 IDOS, p. 11.

- 10 Demos & Pi, Survey “La percezione degli immigrati”, <http://www.demos.it/a01453.php>.
- 11 A new-born traditionally acquires citizenship either through having one or both parents who are citizens of the state (*ius sanguinis*) or on the basis of where the birth takes place (*ius soli*).
- 12 M5S’s ideology and action have strong structural links with the web. Before being in power, the movement produced its fundamental choices by web ‘referendum’. Digital democracy and digital political engagement are part of the model that M5S practises, the final goal being the abolition of representative democracy and parliament in a not too distant future and their substitution with digital agora.
- 13 OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2017*, p. 17.
- 14 Accordingly, the scenarios result in more or less population, more or fewer grey people.
- 15 Istituto Cattaneo, *Immigrazione in Italia: tra realtà e percezione*, August 2018. See [www.cattaneo.org](http://www.cattaneo.org).
- 16 Here “immigrant” refers to a person born outside the EU’s borders and legally resident in Italy.
- 17 The centre developed a scale to measure the extent of nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-religious minority (NIM) sentiment. Pew states that the NIM scale combines answers to 22 survey questions on a wide range of issues including immigration policy. The countries examined are enlisted as follows in terms of the NIM index, from the most nationalistic and anti-minority to the least: Italy, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden. The reference of the Istituto Cattaneo is to J. Diamant, K. J. Starr, *Western Europeans vary in their nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-religious minority attitudes*, 19 June 2018. See <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/06/19/western-europeans-vary-in-their-nationalist-anti-immigrant-and-anti-religious-minority-attitudes/>.



# Migration and public opinion: The case of Germany

THILO SCHOLLE

Germany has been a country of immigrants and of immigration since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During industrialisation, several hundred thousand Poles migrated to the Ruhr valley. After the second world war, millions of Germans who had fled from Russian and Polish occupied areas settled in the western part of Germany. Memoirs show that during the first years, they were often treated with open hostility by the local population – either because they happened to belong to the wrong faith (Catholic in Protestant, Protestant in Catholic areas) or because they were simply refugees and poor. And from the middle of the 1950s onwards, several hundred thousand workers, first from Italy and then from Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Yugoslavia and especially from Turkey were recruited to fill vacancies in West German manufacturing industries – the so-called Gastarbeiter (guest workers). In the eastern part of Germany, the situation was different. The number of migrant workers was nowhere near as high as in the west, and the recruited workers, mainly from Vietnam and Mozambique, were mostly kept apart from the rest of the population.

Even though many people living in (West) Germany were exposed to migration and to migrants, public sentiment at large never caught up with this reality. The official discourse concerning the Gastarbeiter followed the idea that they would return to their native countries after a few years – and many of the Gastarbeiter themselves thought that, too. Reality was different, though: children were born and families settled in Germany for good. Several million inhabitants of Germany can trace their roots back to the Gastarbeiter-generation and are now living in Germany in the third or even fourth generation. The early 1990s saw a large rise in refugees coming to Germany, fleeing wars in Africa and the Middle East, or the civil war in Yugoslavia. After the experiences of Nazi

devastation, Germany had not only signed the international refugee conventions but included a right to asylum in the German constitution. Soon, a rather nasty political debate developed as to whether the country could ‘bear the burden’ of so many refugees, and the governing CDU/CSU-FDP coalition and the then opposition Social Democrats agreed to alter the constitution and restrict access to the asylum process. During the same months of 1993, Germany saw a surge in right-wing violence, culminating in several racist murders, most noticeably the setting fire to a house inhabited by a Turkish family in Solingen, killing five people and injuring more. The situation calmed down eventually, but it remained possible to mobilise xenophobic sentiment, as the successful campaign by the CDU and CSU against the introduction of regular dual citizenship in 1999 showed. The discovery of the NSU (National Socialist Underground) terror group in 2013, which is alleged to have murdered at least 11 people (ten of them because of their alleged Turkish background), gave many immigrants the feeling of not being secure any more. Most of Germany’s non-immigrant population has never really understood the impact this racist violence had on many immigrants, who no longer felt secure or accepted as part of German society.

In contrast to the lack of interest concerning questions of migration and integration shown in public debate, progress ‘on the ground’ has been quite good. Even though unemployment among foreigners and Germans of migration background remains above average, it is far from being endemic. And each successive generation has seen rising levels of education, as well as work place integration. More and more migrants or their children are seen in all positions of society. There are writers, actors and scientists, as well as skilled workers, teachers and doctors – many of them the first in their families to have a university degree or even any formal education. The years saw advancement in social interactions as well, either at school, in civil society organisations or in friendships and marriages.

This success was not only incremental but was brought about by public policies as well – for example, inclusive schooling, vocation-

al training and financial and organisational support for civil society by public institutions. From the 1980s onwards, cities as well as administrations of the Länder (states) started to introduce specialised departments to deal with integration not only as a question of policing foreigners, but also as a field of social policy and with the clear objective of empowering migrants as well. The public took only superficial notice; to many people it seemed that there would be only the enthusiasts of multiculturalism on the one side, and law-and-order-people on the other. That many practitioners did not fit these caricatures and did a lot of idealistic and at the same time pragmatic work for the advancement of equality was largely ignored. This could clearly be seen during the debate about a book on integration in 2010<sup>1</sup> by a former senator in Berlin, in which he assembled many alleged statistics to prove that migrants with a Muslim background were a burden to German society and could not be integrated. The book turned out to be the largest non-fiction sales success on bookshelves since the war and loomed heavily above the public debate. While to many of the readers the author was the first to pronounce the ‘truth’ about the Muslims they had long suspected, many migrants felt deeply insulted. Although public debate surrounding the book saw nuanced statements as well, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the question of so-called “parallel societies” among Muslims and the problems of integrating them into society. It became obvious that the fairly successful reality of migration and integration only played a minor role compared to a public debate largely fuelled by sentiment. Nevertheless, the success of integration ‘on the ground’ continued. More migrants were elected to the Bundestag, Germany’s parliament, and state parliaments, more migrants entered journalism or achieved other positions of public status. Grasped neither really by close followers of integration debates nor by only superficial followers, the gap between a public debate centred on supposed deficits and fairly promising developments ‘on the ground’ did not close.

It is against this background that the heated political debates in Germany concerning questions of migration in the past two years



have to be considered. In the media, questions of migration and integration have been dominant, especially in evening talk show programmes. Nevertheless, migration is not the only topic of political debate, and has not been the only or even a decisive point for the political success of the Social Democratic Party in past elections – either on the federal or on the regional level (where questions including employment, security and pensions have also played a role).

The so-called “refugee crisis” of summer 2015 initially saw an unprecedented example of civil society’s ability to welcome refugees (Willkommenskultur). Thousands volunteered at train stations and housing centres, and later with language courses and assistance for the migrants’ first steps in Germany. Government agencies that had not been prepared for such a great influx of people in such a short period of time slowly adapted to the task, and in the end mastered the situation quite well. At the same time, xenophobic sentiment, open hostility and acts of racist violence remained a problem (for example, the Pegida movement in Dresden or the events in Chemnitz in September 2018).

Public sentiment started to shift after the events in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015-16, when the perception grew stronger that too many of the migrants who had come could not be integrated into German society.<sup>2</sup> Three debates came to the fore in the following weeks: firstly, about how many ‘criminal’ migrants had really come and how to deal with them; secondly, the older debate about whether the integration of the Gastarbeiter and their children had been a success, and, thirdly, the debate about whether belonging to the Islamic faith posed a problem to integration into German society.

An important debate among third-generation migrants, grandchildren of the former Gastarbeiter, as well as among part of the public sphere, had until then been about identity and new ways of being ‘German’. With regard to policies, this debate led more towards questions of upward social mobility, anti-discrimination and to the

question of whether ‘integration’ was something to be demanded from people who had lived all their life in Germany. The ambition to convince the public of the new realities of a post-Gastarbeiter generation of Germans with a migration background was confronted with a public debate that only concentrated on how to integrate the new incoming refugees (or migrants in general), and in the end led to misunderstandings and disappointments among this group of ambitious Germans who also had a migration background.

## **Status quo**

In 2015, 17.1 million inhabitants had a migration background (Migrationshintergrund), 21% of the total population (Mikrozensus 2015). In 2016, 745,545 requests for asylum were recorded (this fell to 142,167 requests in January to September 2018).

In terms of legal as well as actual integration, Germany has been fairly successful in recent years. The old *ius sanguinis* was complemented by *ius soli* elements – and the possibility for dual citizenship was made available to more people than before, even though this was not completely accepted. After 2015, it was widely agreed that the new immigrants should have access to the labour market as well as to language and training programmes. In most cases this is now possible after three months of stay in Germany – which was unthinkable before.

The success of the children of the Gastarbeiter has also been growing. Still not equal to Germans without a migration background in terms of success in education and employment, the number of highly qualified students and employees is still on the rise. Contrary to sentiment held by the public at large and also by some third-generation migrants, the economic and legal situation for migrants in Germany has generally improved over the past decades.

Despite this development, mainstream political parties, especially on the left, appeared unable to build on this trend. In fact, social

democracy in Germany has not succeeded in developing its own clear message on migration in recent years. Even if SPD party members seem to be more open to migration and to equality for migrants in Germany, the party has failed to develop its own clear message on migration and translate this attitude into a clear political agenda.

Currently, publicists and politicians debate whether the left has been too cosmopolitan and too little communitarian – thus losing the working-class vote. In this view, concentrating too much on foreigners' rights and gender issues has alienated the core electorate. I do not support this view. Studies point to a social democratic electorate that is in general open to inclusive and solidary politics, to equal rights for migrants, and to a more equal distribution of wealth. And a study of voting patterns of workers, which will be discussed in more depth later, shows that more relevant than income for Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) voters is the question of the presumed control and influence over one's own life: workers in jobs with good union organisation, strong works councils and a good relationship between unions/works councils and employer tend to vote less for the AfD than those who express the sentiment that "someone else is deciding about my future" (indeed the SPD suffered large electoral defeats even before the debate about refugees started).

According to Eurobarometer,<sup>3</sup>

- 54% of respondents in Germany feel well informed about immigration and related matters. Maybe corresponding to this, 52% of Germans estimate that there are more immigrants staying legally than illegally in the country – while 24% estimate that there are more irregular than regular immigrants.
- 60% of Germans have at least weekly interaction with migrants (42% daily); 22% daily in the neighbourhood, 25% daily at the workplace (with a surprisingly high 41% stating "less often or never"); 48% interact at least once a month using public services;

only 28% state they interact at least once a month at a childcare centre, school or university, while 56% state “less often or never” (one reserve is that all those who do not attend any of these institutions seem to have been included in the figures), and 31% of the Germans surveyed interact at least once a month during sport, voluntary work or cultural activities.

- While 57% of all European respondents state they would feel comfortable having all kinds of social relations with immigrants in general, 55% of Germans state the same. 81% of the European respondents are comfortable with a migrant as a friend (QA6, p. 37) (Germans: 84%), 70% with a migrant as a family member (Germans 72%), and 68% with a migrant as a manager (same for Germans, QA6.1, p. 44).
- Regarding actual personal relations, 27% of Europeans state they have friends who are immigrants (Germans 26%).

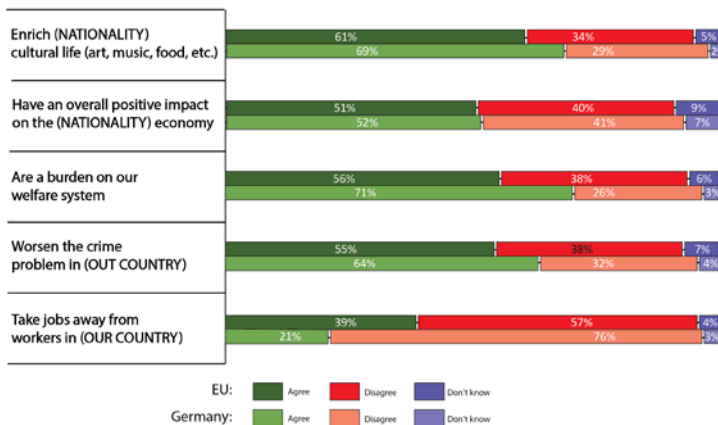
Impressions about migration in general are also mixed:

- 38% of Europeans state immigration is more of a problem (Germany 35%). And 54% of Europeans (50% of Germans) agree that integration is successful in their local area or country (48% of Germans say it is unsuccessful).
- Interestingly, when asked if integration in the city or area where they live is successful, only 46% of Germans answer affirmatively, and 43% negatively. This picture becomes even more complicated when Germans are asked how successful the integration of most immigrants living in their country is perceived to be. Here, the response is 31% successful, 63% unsuccessful.

**Figure 1:** Views regarding the impact of immigrants in society in Germany and the EU

There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants in society in (OUR COUNTRY). To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Overall Immigrants...

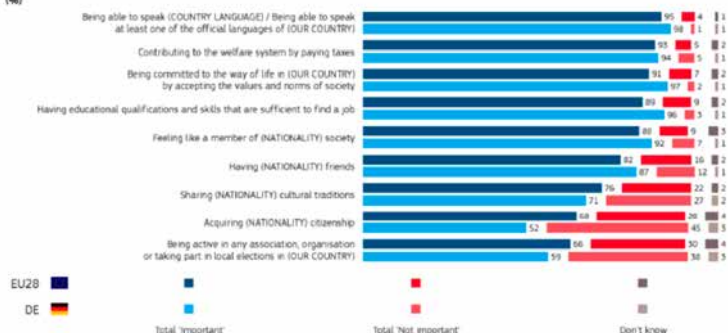


Source: European Commission, *Integration of Immigrants in the European Union*, Special Eurobarometer 469.

**Figure 2:** Views on the meaning of being well-integrated into a society in Germany and the EU.

QA10 People have different views about what it means to be well-integrated into (NATIONALITY) society. How important is each of the following for the successful integration of immigrants in (OUR COUNTRY)?

(%)



Source: European Commission, *Integration of Immigrants in the European Union*, Special Eurobarometer 469.

- 71% of Germans agree that difficulties finding a job are a major obstacle to integration, and 65% consider discrimination as an obstacle, 63% difficulties in accessing long-term residence permits and 58% limited interaction between migrants and citizens, while 55% agree that difficulties in bringing family members might be an obstacle to integration.
- 80% of the Germans surveyed agree it is necessary to invest in integrating immigrants in the long run. 89% of Germans agree or tend to agree that promoting the intermingling of citizens from the host country and immigrants in schools and neighbourhoods is important.
- 93% of Germans think establishing common EU policies and measures on integration is important (EU average 82%). 98% of Germans consider the immigrants themselves important for integration, while there is broad consensus that educational and administrative institutions also play an important role. Only 50% of the Germans surveyed state that their government is doing enough to foster the integration of immigrants (44% disagree).

The Integrationsbarometer of the Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration (SVR) roughly points in the same direction. Since 2015, the SVR's Integrationsbarometer has measured the perceived degree of integration<sup>4</sup> in four fields (neighbourhood, work, social relations and education) and summarises its findings as an index.

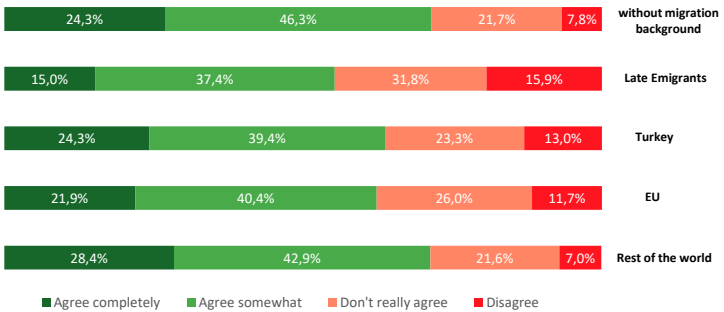
The majority of people surveyed who did not have a migration background gave a fairly positive outlook in 2017-18:

- Germans tend to be slightly less pessimistic than in 2015. Factors for a positive outlook, according to the researchers, are the level of education, experienced discrimination and experience of cultural diversity.

- Across all groups, most scepticism exists concerning integration and education, and the fear of a loss of quality in educational institutions with a high number of migrants. Men are more pessimistic than women in all areas. Men also make up the majority of the AfD electorate. There is a noticeable difference between east and west: inhabitants in the east are considerably more sceptical than their counterparts in the west
- Another figure is also interesting: when asked whether the new incoming refugees might lead to rising criminality, about half think they might, half think not. Asked if the immigrants of past decades have led to rising crime rates, seven out of ten respondents with a background of migration rejected this notion.

**Figure 3:** German people's view on refugees' future contribution to Germany's economic development

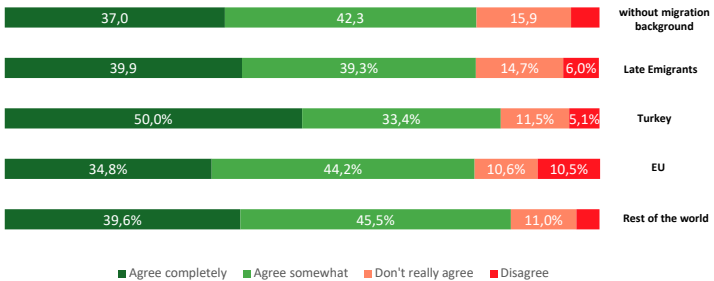
"The admitted Refugees will make a positive contribution to Germany's economic development"



Source: Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration, *Stabiles Klima in der Integrationsrepublik Deutschland*, SVR-Integrationsbarometer 2018.

**Figure 4:** German people's view on migrants' contribution to Germany's economic development.

### "Migrants have made a positive contribution to Germany's economic development"



Source: Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration, *Stabiles Klima in der Integrationsrepublik Deutschland*, SVR-Integrationsbarometer 2018.

- 80% of Germans with a migration background believe that migrants who have been living in Germany for a long time have contributed to economic prosperity, and 70% expect the same from the current migrants. Meanwhile more than two-thirds of Germans without a migration background do not follow the thesis that the number of refugees admitted is a threat for prosperity in Germany – almost the same level as in 2015 (p. 16.). Almost 60% would continue to accept refugees even if all other EU countries did not. A rather diverse picture can be seen when looking at the level of contentment with how the authorities have managed the housing of refugees. In rural areas, 81.7% have a positive impression. In densely populated areas, this level falls to 60.7%. One explanation might be the already difficult housing situation for all the population in those areas.

What we can see here is that the general impression drawn from Eurobarometer is confirmed. We can also clearly see that the perception of how integration works is divided between large cities and rural areas, and most noticeably between west and east. A public debate that was largely centred on the supposed deficits of integration did not turn the whole population into defeatists.



But what is striking again is that past experiences with (successful) migration do not automatically lead to positive perceptions: having the impression that migration did not cause a rise in crime rates in the past does not necessarily lead to a more relaxed perception in the present.

This study is one of the few that tries to differentiate between those with and those without a migration background. The political attitudes of German citizens who either themselves came from other countries, or whose parents did, are almost never surveyed. This is especially problematic as around 10.2% of voters have just such a background. Until now, they have tended to have a much lower turnout at federal elections than those without such a background (82.6% turnout without a migration background, 57.8% with).<sup>5</sup> For a long time migrants in Germany had a strong tendency to vote for the Social Democratic Party (if given the right to vote). A study by the Sachverständigenrat in 2016 came up with a survey about party preferences: CDU/ CSU 27.6 %, SPD 40.1%, Greens 13.2%, the left 11.3%, others 7.7%.<sup>6</sup> According to new data, this tendency seems to be eroding.<sup>7</sup> The follow-up study by the Sachverständigenrat in 2018 showed that 43.2% of those surveyed preferred the CDU/ CSU, and only 25 % the SPD. The SPD remained in the lead among those with Turkish background (37.0% SPD compared to 32.9% CDU/ CSU), but fell from a 69.8% preference in 2016. The study does not offer any conclusive reasoning for this decline, but the researchers of the study tend to attribute the rise of the CDU/CSU largely to the popularity of Angela Merkel among migrants. Even though the SPD is more progressive than the CDU/ CSU in terms of policy, the survey shows that the SPD can no longer feel confident in keeping its edge concerning the votes of those with a migration background.

Behind the public debate on migration looms a much larger debate about the reasons for the recent rise of the AfD party. At the 2017 federal election, the AfD received 12.6% of the vote and more than 30% in some regions in eastern Germany, even winning some seats previously held by Christian democrats.

How does the debate about immigration correspond to political power shifts? Is discontent with the way migration is handled a trigger for voting right wing?

According to Kohlrausch et al,<sup>8</sup> the main trigger for an inclination to vote AfD is discontent with one's own life. This does not necessarily refer to an objective social status, but rather to a subjective impression. The study was conducted between January and February 2017, after the events in Cologne but before last year's federal elections. The main trigger here is the perception of being personally set back.

- AfD voters rank themselves lower in society regardless of their real income and seem to experience a social decline compared to their parents. At the same time, they experience a three-fold sense of loss of control: personally, regarding technological changes and the fear of not being able to adapt; politically, with the perception that politics and institutions are distant and keep ignoring their expectations; and with regard to a national state that is not able to fulfil the task of protecting its own population, for example in the case of an influx of refugees.

The situation in the workplace seems to be very important. Here, not only is the actual situation significant, but also the fear of one's own future failures.

- Loss of control, for example due to digitalised controls at the workplace, may lead to a vote for the AfD. The mere existence of union representation or collective bargaining agreements seems not to alter this trend. The group most at risk of voting right wing seems to be male middle-income, middle professional training, who argue that what happens to them is decided somewhere in the outside world, beyond their influence. If they are at a workplace without collective bargaining agreement and on a temporary contract, their inclination to vote right-wing is much higher.

Public sentiment seems to be inconsistent. Fairly broad contentment with the current life situation and scepticism concerning future developments are sometimes voiced by the same people. With regard to identities, religion seems to be eroding, while national identity is gaining in importance. This is not so much with regard to German history but to the economic achievements of companies and employees, as well as to political achievements like democracy, gender equality and the social state.

Solidarity, too, seems to be still a strong value:

**Figure 5:** Perception of social cohesion in German society



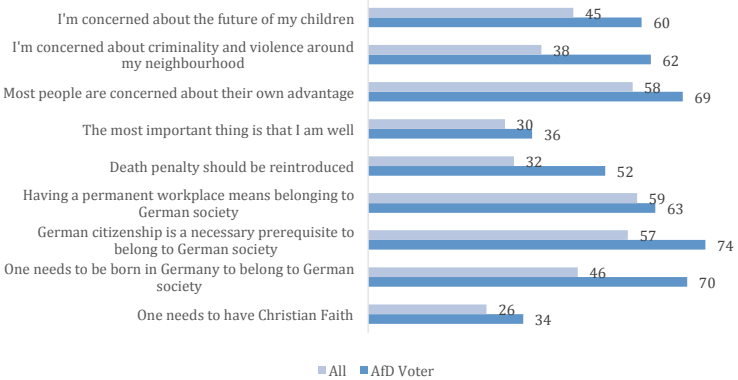
Source: R. Hilmer, B. Kohlrausch, R. Müller-Hilmer, J. Gagné, *Einstellung und soziale Lebenslage. Eine Spurensuche nach Gründen für rechtspopulistische Orientierung, auch unter Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern*, Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Working Paper Forschungsförderung, N. 044, August 2017.

- According to Kohlrausch, 53% agree with the thesis that society is increasingly drifting apart. 49% agree with the thesis that “for people like me the political leaders do less than for other groups in society”.
- 68% still agree that freedom of speech exists in practice, and 67% agree that the country is generally democratic.
- At the same time, 69% of respondents agree that the leading people in politics and the media “live in their own world”, and 56% agree that it does not matter for which party one votes.

- 57% agree that politicians are only pretending to act, while vested interest groups pull the triggers. Workers do not have enough to say (63% agree), but the collective bargaining system produces good results (55%).
- Worries or great worries include the spread of terrorism (78%), rise of crime (72%), number of immigrants (62%) and the fate of refugees (39%). It is interesting that only 23% of respondents share the view that it should be possible to live “other cultures” in Germany, while 60% agree that foreigners should adapt to the German culture. The special responsibility of Germany to welcome refugees is shared by 25% (opposed by 56%), while 56% agree that the state should prohibit the influx of immigrants in order to protect the social security systems.
- On the other hand, 48% agree that legal immigrants should have the same rights as Germans (31% oppose this), and that it is better if people from different parts of the world live together (47% agree, 27% disagree). 36% consider immigration as a gain for the country, while 44 % feel alien in their own country.
- When looking at the future, voters of the AfD are far more pessimistic (67%, 46% overall), while only 33% of AfD voters are optimistic (54% overall). 45% overall are pessimistic about the future of their children as opposed to 60% of AfD voters. While 38% of all respondents are afraid of crime and violence in their living environment, this rises to 62% for AfD voters.

In general, the trust of AfD voters in their fellow human beings is lower:

**Figure 6:** Perception of AfD voters versus all voters



Source: Kohlrausch et al.

Kohlrausch and others conclude that the main driver for voting AfD is insecurity at the workplace and the general fear of no longer being able to direct one's own life. The debate about migration is perhaps therefore just a superficial sign for something even more profound – a general uncertainty about the future. There are several other recent studies that also point in this direction: people feel well currently, but harbour fears about the future, either for themselves or their children. Klaus Dörre developed the idea that over recent years political impression has shifted from “class” to “nation”, meaning that entitlement may no longer be derived from being a good worker, but from being a good German.<sup>9</sup>

A recent study for the German insurance industry found that a majority considers its own material situation positive, while only 13% think it is negative.<sup>10</sup>

- 79% of the “middle generation” (30 to 59 years old) are happy with their quality of life. 40% state their quality of life has risen over the past five years, 41% state it has remained the same and only 17% state it has declined. Weaknesses of Germany are said

to be the distribution of income and wealth (77%), the care system for the elderly (66%), the responsiveness of politics (64%), the integration of immigration (62%), the pension system (59%), the balance between family and work (56%), and the income of employees (55%). People thus worry about many different topics, and integration is only one of several important factors.

- According to this study, the major tasks for any German government should be to provide an affordable and secure public health system (84%), to narrow the gap between rich and poor (79%), to fight terrorism and criminality (78%), to secure the pension system (76%) and to fight the root-causes of the refugee crises (76%). Asked if they trust politics to look after the interests of their generation, 33% of all the 30-59 year olds surveyed state they do, while 41% state they do not. People with “low socio-economic status” were even more clear: 54% no, 23% yes, in the middle income-group it was about average, while at the top, 44% stated they would trust politics (27% not).

A study carried out in 2016 by the political consultancy company Polytix for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung points in a similar direction. The researchers conclude that there is a danger of a new cleavage developing between those who are content and those who are discontent, those who are more active and those who are more passive.<sup>11</sup> On the positive side, the researchers see a growing re-politicisation of the population. They detect a strong demand for more participation, social cohesion, solidarity and consciousness for inequality. The challenge for democratic parties is to stand up for a common base of values that as many people as possible can identify with – and to improve or secure the living conditions for various groups in society. Sticking to traditional values and the fear of social change or progress are considered to be linked to the fear of losing security. These fears need to be taken seriously by proposing concrete solutions to hard problems. People are in search of political orientation and direction. The interviews conducted for this study show a strong wish to have political representatives with steady views.

The alienation of many people from traditional politics is immense. Trust in the ability of politics to really change things in a positive manner has decreased. Unfortunately, the only two examples in the past decade when politics seemed to act quickly and by spending a reasonably high amount of money in a rather short period of time were the bailout of banks after 2008, and after the arrival of the refugees in 2015. Many people might have ended up perceiving that quick reaction by politics is possible – but only for ‘them’, not for ‘us’. People think they have something to lose and want to have a secure perspective for their life (and for the life of their children).

Very recently, the Bertelsmann Stiftung pointed to the rise of populist inclinations among voters.<sup>12</sup> According to a survey, 30.4% of the participants check all eight questions relevant to populist voting, 32.8% do not share populist tendencies, and 36.8% have a mixed result. In general, populist leanings seem to be higher with less formal education and less income and among non-voters. The items to define populist voting included agreement that “the people often share the same position, but politicians follow other goals”, that “political parties are only interested in votes, not in intentions of the voters” and that “compromise is in reality betrayal”.

The (declining) electorate of the SPD is averagely populist, so the party needs to balance its political approach somehow between populist and non-populist voters. Regarding the position of a fictive political candidate on migration, the opinion that receiving more refugees may produce a negative reaction is widely shared among participants in the survey. Among populist voters this rejection of refugees is even stronger, while non-populist voters see the intake of a few new refugees as positive. Asked about other policy areas, the field of social housing is one of the few topics frequently mentioned by both populist and non-populist voters. Support for a fictive political candidate in favour of doing more in this field rises among populist as well as among non-populist voters.

## Recommendations (Dos and Don'ts)

One should not be drawn to the conclusion that all politics is immigration, as this is not the case. The debate about immigration is probably largely a proxy for other political questions and feelings of uncertainty about the future of society and social welfare.

To be clear, many people seem to share a feeling that not all goes well regarding migration and integration. Talking about other policy areas might be perceived as an attempt to escape from talking about the problems of immigration. This should not be the case – it is not about avoiding this topic, but about putting migration into perspective.

It is important to know that there are people in Germany who have a 'consistent' racist world view that has nothing to do with outside reasons but with ideological convictions. And these people will perhaps refrain from voting right-wing because other issues seem to be more important at the moment, but not because of any migration/integration policy that would be possible for progressive parties.

The interesting group for the political left is those who vote or tend to vote right-wing (or who do not vote at all at the moment) and who are not convinced racists. Here, the feeling of uncertainty perhaps needs to be recognised and politicised, shifting the debate away from an 'us – them' cleavage in terms of ethnic or other background and concentrating it on social cleavages.

So don't panic and don't be afraid of your own electorate. Integration is possible; communicating about it, too.

The studies cited above show that too many Germans feel ill-informed about migration, and that roughly half of those surveyed have a rather bad picture of how integration seems to fail. This might explain why books such as the one described above led to such success. And many people seem to be unable to relate fairly



good personal experiences to a general debate that suggests integration does not work. By contrast, we can see a majority that would have no problem accepting migrants in all kinds of social relations – even though far fewer than that number do actually have such relations. More and better information about the current state of affairs concerning migration and integration is thus necessary.

The questions concerning the importance of language and work point to a picture of integration that puts heavy emphasis on integration via the workplace. This is a point that is not only correct – integration functions largely through the workplace – but also that can really be put into policy, compared to much more vague demands for ‘cultural integration’ or suchlike. In the end it therefore seems possible to obtain majorities in favour of integration policies that centre on the workplace – and that include active programmes as well as anti-discrimination work. And it should be possible to develop and frame a coherent integration policy centred on language skills and workplace integration, and that reconciles worries about the impact of migration on employment and the future of social security with humanitarian demands.

So don’t dig too much on the cultural side. The political message is simple: criminal behaviour will be tolerated by no one. Neither will racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism, or religious extremism. Debates about which religious texts can be (mis)used for which type of extremism is something for academia. What counts for a society to function is how people behave in their everyday lives. Being able to show that by working migrants can be as successful as anybody else is important. And reality is on the progressive side here... Plus, the workplace is one of the main places for social interaction. And vice-versa, employment is the main (not only economic) prerequisite for the empowerment of migrants themselves.

Take into account that even though many possible SPD voters share doubts about the current handling of migration, there are also many who do not. A restrictive migration policy might alienate a

part of the electorate without gaining many other voters. And take into account that there are over 20% of people with a migration background who make up about 10% of voters: they need to be addressed and activated by progressive parties as well.

Develop political proposals for a decent and secure future. Shift the debate: it is the social question, stupid!

Social democracy needs to prove that it can act quickly and boldly. What alienates people is the impression that after 20 years or so of fiscal austerity, suddenly money is there although it is not spent on issues of common concern but on refugees. Therefore, do fund public services and public administration. Make the state work again for the people (kindergartens, schools, universities, health, care for the elderly). People also care about housing. Pushing new migrants and established Germans (and “old” migrants as well) to compete for housing and good schools needs to be stopped. And as the above-mentioned study by Bertelsmann shows, both the populist as well as the non-populist portion of the Social Democratic electorate is in favour of much more spending on social housing and of finding solutions for housing for middle-income families as well.

People need to see that politics can deliver for them: by really seeing the new kindergarten in their city, by experiencing better funding for schools, maybe even by seeing the construction of new housing by a public housing company. And if this cannot be implemented due to a lack of political majorities, it needs at least to be hammered out as part of social democratic policy proposals for the next elections.

Make work secure again: stop alienation at the workplace by raising the minimum wage, helping unions expand, levelling the playing field between employees and employers, reforming social security to take away the fears of losing everything just a few years after losing a job. Propose policies that turn the debate about the digitalisation of work into a new debate about the humanisation of work!

Renew the promise that those who work hard and try to contribute to society have the chance of a secure and fulfilled life. Help rebuild confidence that a solidary society can be achieved.

Build alliances: all those interested in a solidary society are in! Unions, social organisations, migrant organisations, other minorities.

Make Europe work again, maybe even with alliances of the willing (governments) and the use of financial as well as legal force. End social dumping and introduce a set of (relative) minimum social standards across all member states.

Migration does not need to be a political issue to be afraid of. It needs to be put into perspective with other issues. It can work if it is part of a general and coherent political concept that tries to “bring the good life for the many, not the few”.

## Notes

- 1 T. Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, Munich 2010.
- 2 That night groups of young men mainly from North African descent harassed women who were on their way back to Cologne's main train station. The behaviour of the young men was attributed to misogynist attitudes due to their Arab and Muslim background.
- 3 The data presented below can be found in European Commission, *Integration of Immigrants in the European Union*, Special Eurobarometer 469, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/results-special-eurobarometer-integration-immigrants-european-union\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/results-special-eurobarometer-integration-immigrants-european-union_en).
- 4 Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration, *Stabiles Klima in der Integrationsrepublik Deutschland*, SVR-Integrationsbarometer 2018.
- 5 A. M. Wüst, T. Faas, *Politische Einstellungen von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund*, Berlin 2018.
- 6 Sachverständigenrat, *Stabiles Klima in der Integrationsrepublik Deutschland*.
- 7 Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Migration und Integration, *Parteipräferenzen von Zuwanderinnen und Zuwanderern: Abschied von alten Mustern*, Kurzinformation des Forschungsbereichs 2018-2, Berlin 2018.
- 8 R. Hilmer, B. Kohlrausch, R. Müller-Hilmer, J. Gagné, *Einstellung und soziale Lebenslage. Eine Spurensuche nach Gründen für rechtspopulistische Orientierung, auch unter Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern*, Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Working Paper Forschungsförderung, N. 044, August 2017.
- 9 K. Dörre, S. Bosse, J. Lütten, J. Köster, *Arbeiterbewegung von rechts? Motive und Grenzen einer imaginären Revolte*, in *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 22 May 2018.
- 10 Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, *Generation Mitte 2017 – Bilanz und Erwartungen am Beginn der neuen Legislaturperiode*, <https://www.gdv.de/de/medien/aktuell/die-generation-mitte--2018--35798>.
- 11 J. Faus, R. Faus, A. Gloger, *Kartografie der politischen Landschaft in Deutschland*, Berlin 2016, p. 78ff.
- 12 R. Vehkamp, W. Merkel, *Populismusbarometer 2018. Populistische Einstellungen bei Wählern und Nichtwählern in Deutschland*, Gütersloh 2018.



# Attitudes in France towards migration

HERVÉ LE BRAS

## The French context

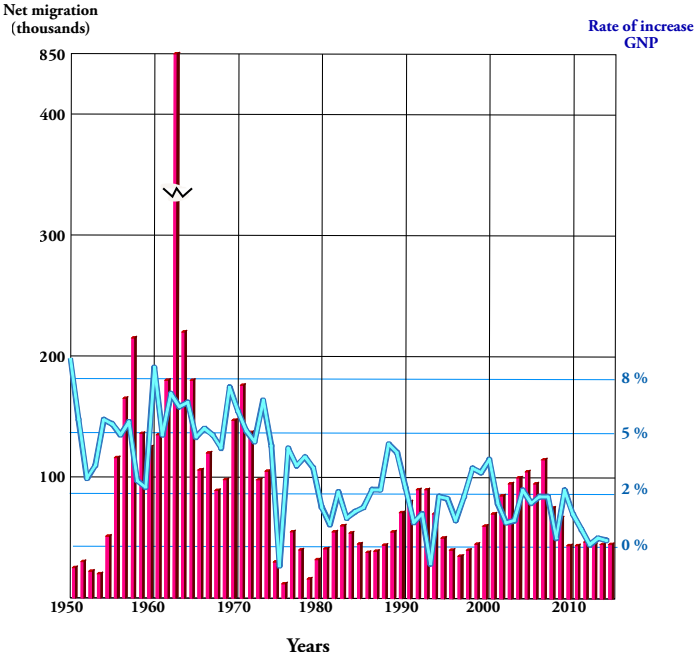
In a cross-sectional perspective, what happens in a country is influenced by what happens in other countries at the same time. For example, the populism of Erdogan, Trump, Putin and Orbán has boosted the electoral victories of François Legault in Quebec, Matteo Salvini in Italy and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. We can speak of an epidemic or, according to Gabriel Tarde,<sup>1</sup> of the laws of imitation. The other perspective is longitudinal: we can expect populism and the anti-migration climate to follow a historical path and develop independently of their departure in space and time. In this second respect, France is an interesting case, as it has quite a long history of immigration and a well-established xenophobic political party, the Front National (FN), which has been in existence much longer than similar xenophobic parties in many other European states. A study of the development of immigration and its causes in France can provide an understanding about the future of immigration in other countries where this issue is more recent. The same can be said for the development of xenophobic political parties, as the FN managed to capture a large share of the vote in France as early as 1984.

### *Immigration in France: A moderate inflow for 40 years*

During the post-war period of rapid economic growth, a huge appeal was made in France for international manpower. Between 1955 and 1974, average annual net migration stood at 175,000 persons. This figure corresponds to 3.6 per thousand of the total population per year. During the following 44 years, from 1975 to 2017, when the economy did not do as well as before, average annual net migration stood at 61,000 persons or 1.1 per thousand.<sup>2</sup> In the last ten years, from 2008 to 2017, these figures have been

about the same (67,000 persons and 1.0 per thousand). The relation between net migration and the economy can be illustrated more precisely by comparing net migration year on year (black sticks) and the rate of GNP increase (blue curve), as shown on Figure 1:<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1:** Net migration and economic growth in France since 1950



Source: Adaptation of figure 6-3 in H. Le Bras, *L'âge des migrations*.

The downward trend of economic growth is clear, but after 1974 the trend of immigration is stable with a large semi-periodic fluctuation. Fluctuations of the economy and net migration are interwoven. When the economy recovers, one or two years later

net migration increases too, and when the economy declines so does net migration, again with one or two years' delay. The same trend was observed throughout the 19th century for transatlantic migration (as illustrated by Brinley Thomas in his book on Atlantic economy<sup>4</sup>).

Immigration was perceived more negatively after 1974 even though it was at a much lower level than before (the net migration rate was 3.5 times lower after 1974). Among the numerous explanations for this paradox are:

- 1) Prior to 1974, migration was largely circular. After that, family reunifications gained momentum.
- 2) During the 1950s and '60s, migrants were mostly European (from Spain, Italy and Portugal). Later on, increasing numbers came from the Maghreb, Turkey and sub-Saharan Africa.
- 3) Local people are more sensitive to stock than to fluxes, and the stock was necessarily increasing due to the positive fluxes throughout the period after 1974.

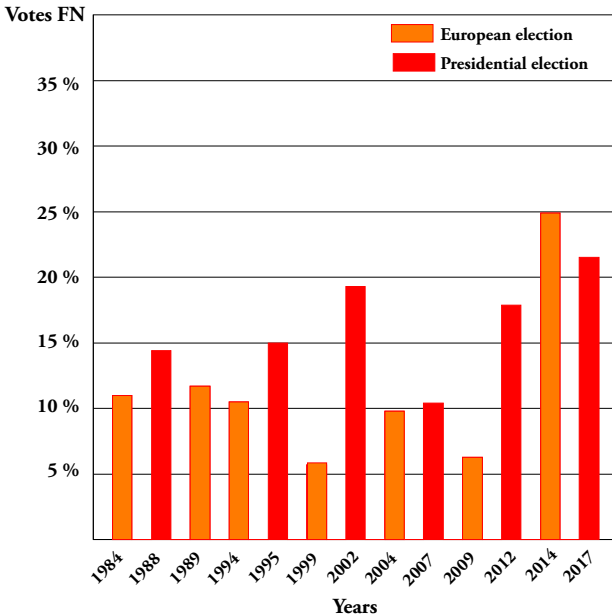
Some parts of these hypotheses are relevant, but no precise work has yet been carried out to measure their magnitude or exact explanatory power.

### *Xenophobia: The rise of the FN*

The Front National was founded in 1971 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. For years, its electoral results were very low (0.75% at the 1975 presidential election, 0.23% at the 1978 parliamentary election). However, at the European election of 1984, the party suddenly won 11% of the vote. Since that time, the FN has never fallen below 5% of the vote at national level. Its best score (28%) was obtained at the regional election of 2015 (but with a low turnout rate). As Figure 2 shows, the FN's results have fluctuated greatly since 1984.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 2: FN's scores at the European and presidential elections since 1984



Source: Designed by the author with data from the French Home Office.

The general trend is quite slow, and if the same trend continues the score will reach 21.2% in 2030. A dominant position is therefore not at stake although the scant number of data does not allow firm conclusions. The fluctuation is smaller if the results of just the presidential elections are retained. These are the most important elections in France, but the trend is actually still about the same (ie, a slow rise).

In fact, changes have occurred outside the FN, in what is called the 'strong' right. At the second round of the 2002 election, Jean-Marie Le Pen increased his first-round score by only one point, whereas in 2017, his daughter Marine gained 12.5 points between

the first and second rounds. What is emerging, not only in France, is a fast-spreading hold on the centre-right electorate by the extreme right.<sup>6</sup>

How can the FN's sudden surge in 1984, jumping from 0.2% to 11%, be explained? Some have highlighted the parallel decline of the Communist Party (PC), which fell from 18% in 1978 to 11% in 1984. However, the geographies of the two parties did not coincide as the PC was strong in the north, centre and south of France, while the FN succeeded in the east, south and centre-east. Another explanation is the disappointment of left-wing voters after Mitterrand's political turn in 1983 with his austerity policy. Yet there is no formal proof of either of these explanations.

### *Migration and FN votes*

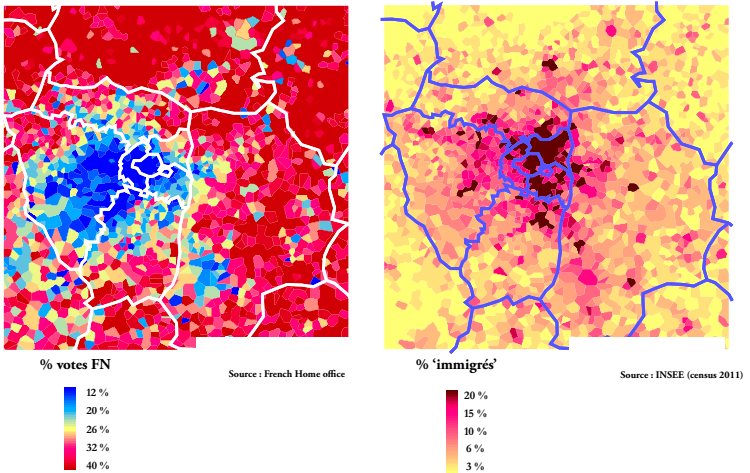
The geographical distribution of FN votes in relation to that of migrants varies strongly depending on the scale chosen and the time. On the broad scale of big regions, the correlation between the two factors has been high since the beginning. On the small scale, the correlation is inverted. In between, on the medium scale (the 96 French *départements*), the correlation has greatly changed with time. In 1984, the geographical distribution of FN votes by *département* was closely correlated to that of immigrants from Muslim countries. But with successive elections, the correlation became weaker until it vanished altogether in the latest presidential election. The following table shows the correlation between the percentage of FN votes and the percentage of *immigrés*<sup>7</sup> born in Muslim countries. The fact that this correlation is no longer pertinent means that voters' direct encounters with immigrants from Muslim countries are no longer a direct cause of xenophobia. Xenophobia is thus no longer rooted in direct encounters, but rather in voters' perception. And unfortunately, it is more difficult to change perception than to change reality.

**Table 1:** Correlations at different dates between percentage of FN votes and percentage of *immigrés* from Maghreb and Turkey, at the department's level

Census year	Election year	Correlation coefficient
1982	1984	0.85
	1986	0.79
	1988	0.79
1990	1989	0.75
	1992	0.67
	1995	0.67
1999	1997	0.55
	1998	0.6
	2002	0.46
	2004	0.45
2008	2004	0.46
	2007	0.19
	2010	0.15
	2012	0.1

At the local level, an inverse correlation exists, meaning that everyday life in contact with *immigrés* is not a problem. However, those who do not interact frequently with *immigrés* tend to fear them, largely for irrational reasons. They rely on media-information and on narratives, which are largely rumours, told by those closest to them. Figure 3 illustrates this by comparing the proportion of *immigrés* and the FN votes in more than 2,000 communes in the Paris region. The further voters are from the centre, the more they vote FN, but inversely, in areas where there are more *immigrés*, the less the FN wins ballots.

**Figure 3:** Comparison between the distribution of FN' votes and proportion of 'immigrés' in Paris region: the two are in an inverse relationship<sup>9</sup>

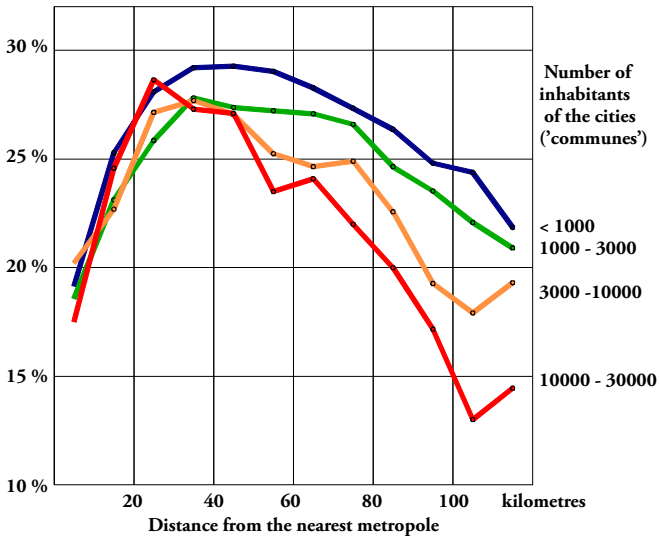


Source: Adaptation of figure III-2 in H. Le Bras, *Le pari du FN*, Paris 2015.

To pursue this further, the set of communes needs to be split according to their size (number of inhabitants) and their distance from the closest big cities (in this case, the 40 cities with more than 75,000 inhabitants). Figure 4 shows the percentage of votes for the FN relative to these two factors. Irrespective of the size of the commune, the curves show the same features: a low percent-

age of votes for the FN at the centre of the big cities, an increase in the percentage until it plateaus at a distance of approximately 40km from the city, and then with further increasing distance, a slow decrease until the percentage of FN voters again reaches the same low level observed in the city centres. As regards the size of the communes, the correlation is simpler: the less populated the commune, the higher the FN's share of the vote, irrespective of the proportion of *immigrés* (although they are far less prevalent in these communes).

**Figure 4:** Percentage of votes for Le Pen in the first round of the presidential election according to the distance from the nearest metropole and the size of the cities



Source: Designed by the author with data from the France Home Office.

While the contrast between rural and urban settings or between so-called metropolises and their hinterland is an oversimplification of some sociologists who do not pay too much attention to data,

a possible explanation of the up-and-down shape of the curves may perhaps be found in the anthropological concept of ‘neither too close, nor too far’. Those living a medium distance from the metropole frequently commute to the centre. They encounter *immigrés* without entering into contact with them. The fear of these medium-distance voters is induced by these passive encounters, whereas if they knew the *immigrés* better they would probably adopt the same attitude as those living in the city centre. Nevertheless, although this argument may contribute to the explanation, it does not consider the inverse relationship between the size of the commune and the percentage of votes for the FN.

On the broad scale, the correlation between FN votes and people coming from Muslim countries remains high and has been fairly stable since 1984. The regional distribution of votes for the FN is simple: high percentages of votes in the north east, north of the River Seine and in a large zone close to the Mediterranean coast; low percentages of votes in the west and south-west. This distribution has remained stable since the FN’s first leap forwards in 1984.

A particular feature of France’s diversity dating back to at least the early Middle Ages is the contrast of areas where people either lived clustered in villages or towns (the north-east and close to the Mediterranean coast) or where they inhabited the territory sparsely in small secluded hamlets or farms (the rest of the country). The social life and history of these ‘two Frances’ are in contrast. Where the population traditionally lived in clusters, contact with neighbours was daily and work was largely in common. However, where the population was scattered, people had few contacts and work was predominantly a family business.<sup>9</sup> Modern lifestyle had a very different impact on these two Frances. In the regions of clustered population, life in common disappeared. Work was no longer in common but outside the local community, and small shops closed their doors. Social links and thus social cohesion became weaker. By contrast, in the parts of France where peo-

ple were scattered, the improved road network and generalised use of cars made people come closer together, reinforcing social links and cohesion. Moreover, in the clustered areas, people left agriculture quickly and the resulting great leap in social mobility is now historically behind them, even forgotten. In the scattered areas, traditional agriculture continued longer and decreased only one generation ago. The memory of their past misery is still vivid and the improvement in lifestyle is greatly appreciated. Many social and economic indicators point in the same direction.

*Ceteris paribus*, the same process took place between small and large communes. Villages and small towns have seen public and private services disappear. Small shops are replaced by huge shopping malls. Small hospital units, small law courts and local police stations have been relocated inside larger ones in the big cities. Not only has this been a blow to social links but it is also felt as a threat to security. Surveys show that the smaller a place is, the more its inhabitants fear for their security, despite the fact that criminal rates are generally low in remote areas.

### **Current state of affairs**

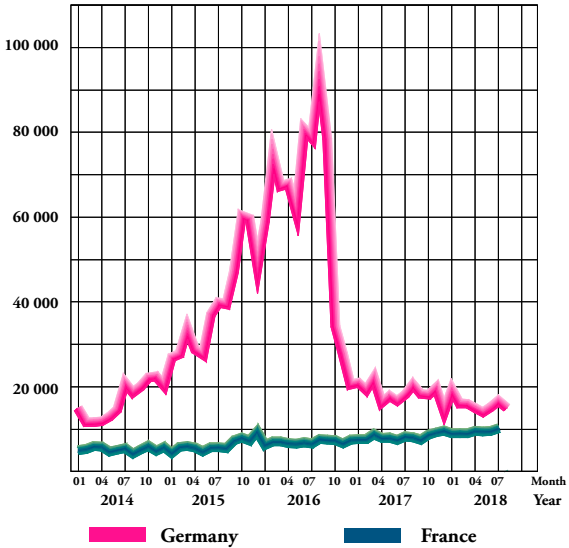
What is the impact of the worldwide rise in populism and the recent inflows of refugees on the complex pattern of interrelation between migration and xenophobic political parties in France?

#### *A moderate inflow of refugees in recent years*

France experienced an inflow of refugees mainly by proxy. Figure 5 shows the monthly number of asylum seekers in France and Germany from January 2014 to July 2018. The difference between the two countries is striking. Germany experienced a wave that peaked at around 100,000 people in August 2016, whereas France saw a slow and regular monthly increase from 6,000 to 10,000.

**Figure 5:** Monthly number of asylum seekers in France (blue) and Germany (red) since January 2014

Monthly number  
of asylum seekers



Source: Designed by the author with data from Eurostat.

What is more, the origins of asylum seekers in France did not reflect the crisis in the Middle East.



**Table 2:** Nationality of asylum seekers in France in 2016 and 2017, by rank order in 2017

Country	2016	2017
Albania	4601	7633
Afghanistan	5646	5989
Haiti	4927	4939
Sudan	5897	4488
Guinea	2336	3781
Syria	3615	3319
Ivory Coast	1531	3246
Dem. Rep. of Congo	2551	2942
Algeria	1972	2459
Bangladesh	2276	2411

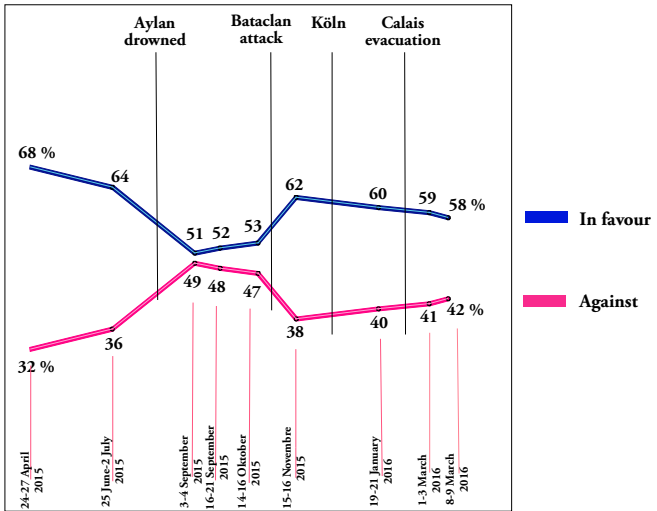
In 2017, Syria ranked sixth among the countries of origin of asylum seekers, whereas Albania was first. These data do not corroborate the talk about a ‘refugee crisis’. Even if the annual total number of asylum applications grew from 60,000 ten years ago, their maximum of 99,000 in 2017 is far from the number of regular residence permits issued the same year (260,000).

### *Shocking events*

When there is a gap between reality and perception, as in the ‘refugee-crisis’, emotions generated by particular events tend to take over. Yet their effect does not last long. This was clearly illustrated in France by the monthly surveys asking the question: “Are you in favour or against dispatching migrants who arrive by tens of thousands on the coasts of Greece and Italy, between all EU-countries, including France?” In June 2016, 64% were against. In September, after the pictures of the young drowned Syrian boy,

Aylan Kurdi, were widely publicised by the media, the percentage fell to 51%. It rose again to 62% after the terrorist attack on the Bataclan nightclub in Paris, and dropped to 58% two months later (Figure 6). This suggests that shocking events do not build attitudes, but fluctuations around them, because the effects of the events are short-lived.

**Figure 6:** Answers at the question: "Are you in favour or against dispatching migrants who arrive by tens of thousands on the coasts of Greece and Italy between all EU-countries including France?"<sup>10</sup>



Source: Adapted from Note for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Fondation Jean Jaurès concerning attitudes toward migrants in the EU, May 2017.

### Class identification

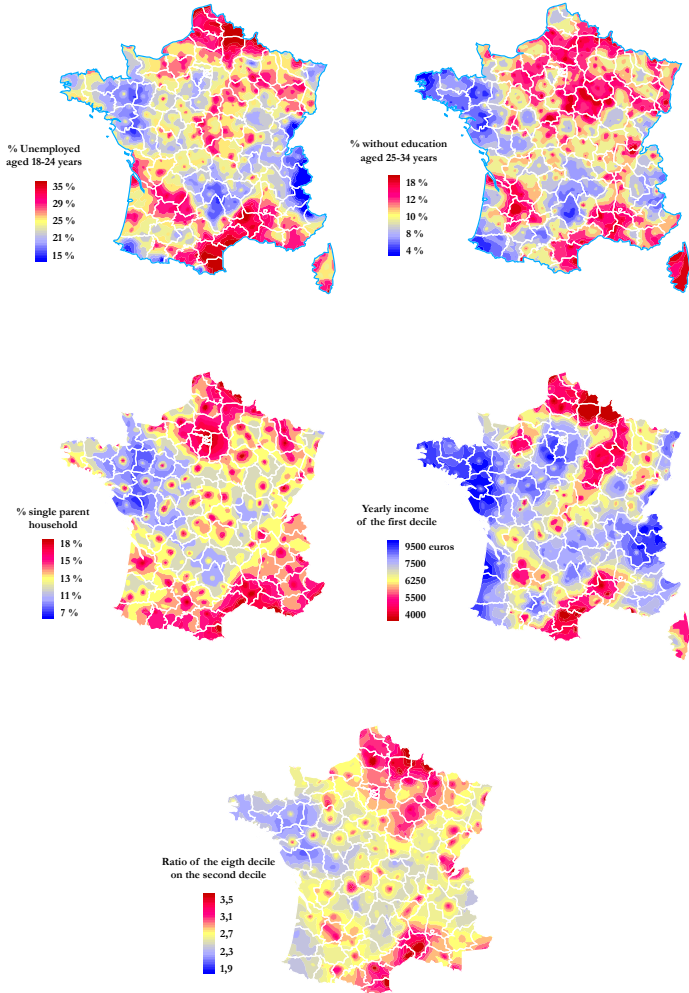
France does not differ much from neighbouring countries regarding the socio-political structure of those who have voted for far-right parties. During the first round of the 2017 French presidential elections, 43% of workers voted for the FN candidate Marine le Pen,

but only 12% of professionals. Meanwhile, 41 % of those without any qualifications voted FN, but only 8% of those with a university degree. Age groups are another salient feature: 21% of those aged less than 25 voted for the FN, 27% of those aged 25 to 55, and only 15% of those older than 65. However, these data do not tell us the reasons for voters' anti-migrant sentiment. Nationalism and populism are not sufficiently precise motives.

### *Economic problems*

Retired people usually fear for their security more than younger people. It therefore follows that retired people should be more receptive to far-right propaganda that insists on security and the establishment of a link between immigration and insecurity. This is the case in Germany, or in the UK among Brexit supporters, but, as shown above, not in France, where the working-age population is the most prone to vote for the FN. If not for their security in general, these French people's vote may be for the security of their job, or out of their fear of unemployment. The geographical distribution of social problems in France (ie, unemployment rate, poverty rate, proportion of young people not in education, inequality, single-parent families) can be seen on the following five maps of Figure 7a.

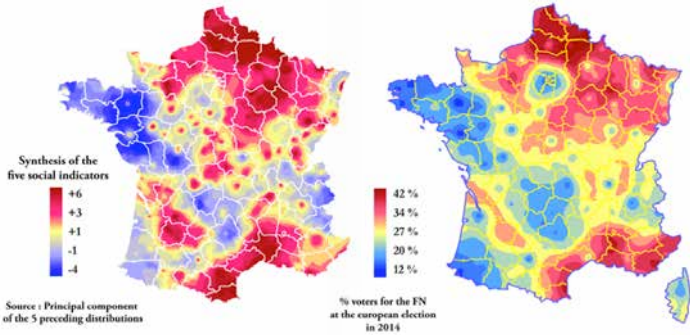
**Figure 7a:** Intensity of five difficulties met by the French population (census 2011)



Source: Adaptation of Figures VI-2 and VI-3 in H. Le Bras, *Le pari du FN*.

A synthesis of these five distributions is close to the distribution of FN votes (Figure 7b).

**Figure 7b:** Synthesis of the five maps of Figure 7a, compared to the distribution of FN's votes in 2014



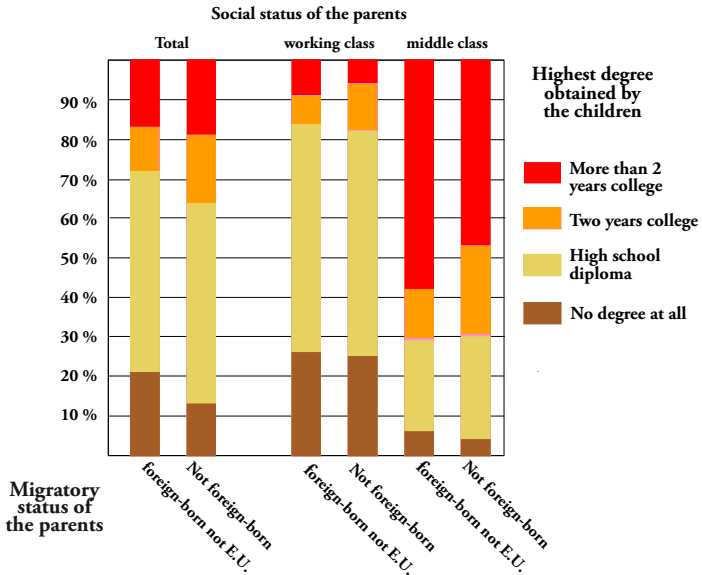
Source: Adaptation of Figures VI-2 and VI-3 in H. Le Bras, *Le pari du FN*.

Although the general shape of these two maps is very similar, showing that the FN feeds on social problems, there is an important difference: the votes for the FN are lower in cities, particularly in the largest ones, despite the five above-mentioned social problems being more prevalent in these large cities. The explanation lies with politics rather than with economics. People living far from the city feel they take no part in decisions. The so-called principle of affected interests (PAI) is behind this: in a democracy, when people are concerned by an action, they must be part of the decision.<sup>11</sup> In this case, those people left out in remote parts of the country, in villages and with a low level of education, express a democratic claim in voting for the far right, not a fascination with authoritarian personalities. The same is even truer in the populism of the left, as clearly demonstrated by such authors as Ernesto Laclau or Chantal Mouffe.<sup>12</sup>

## *Integration*

Immigrés are increasingly accused of not being ‘integrated’.<sup>13</sup> Yet what is the exact meaning of integration? Nobody can define it precisely, beyond being familiar with the French language and respecting the laws of the Republic. Some comparisons can nevertheless be made between immigrants and ‘non-immigrants’, as the French National Institute of Statistics (INSEE) calls them. One survey has compared the shares of the children of both groups who are in formal education – in other words, the share of the children of immigrants from outside the EU and the share of the children of non-immigrants. The former are less educated. However, if the comparison is drawn at the same social level of these children when they become parents, the result is reversed. The children of immigrant workers are then slightly more educated than those of non-immigrant workers, as are the children of middle class immigrant parents. The results of the survey are displayed on Figure 8.<sup>14</sup>

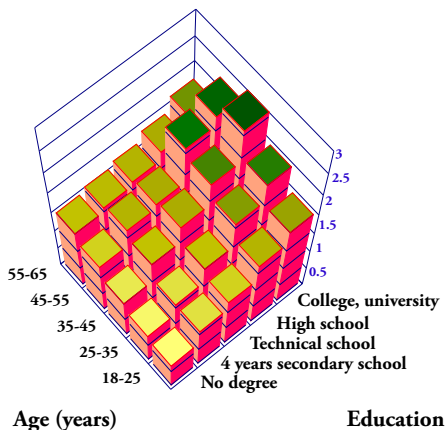
**Figure 8:** Level of education of the children of parents foreign-born (out of the EU) and not foreign-born according to the social class of their parents



Source: Designed by the author with data from Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques, *Immigrés et descendants d'immigrés*, 2012, p. 167.

At the level of education, integration does therefore work in France. The problem arises after educations is completed. With the same degree, immigrants are more often unemployed and suffer discrimination. The problem of integration is largely a problem of inclusion. This should be addressed not on the side of the immigrants, but on the side of the non-immigrants. Immigrants and their children hope degrees will protect them from unemployment. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The unemployment rate of immigrants decreases with their education, but that decrease is slower for them than for the non-immigrants, so the ratio of the unemployment of immigrants to that of non-immigrants increases with their education, as shown on the Figure 9.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 9:** Ratio of unemployment rate of foreign-born, to that of the not-foreign-born in the working population, according to age and level of education



Source: Adaptation of figure 7-4 from H. Le Bras, *Anatomie sociale de la France*, Paris 2016.

Much care should therefore be taken when alluding to integration. It is frequently a means of creating distance between immigrants and non-immigrants.

## Recommendations

### *Attention to vocabulary*

Many important words used in the field of migration are inaccurate. Their blurred signification opens the door to inappropriate interpretations. We should demand that those using these words give exact definitions. As seen above, 'integration' is one such word. Another is 'national identity'. Nations, states and nation-states exist and are precisely defined by laws and identity documents. National identity is vague and equivocal. It suggests there is a difference between identity and the nation-state, something more, something added to citizenship, or that some citizens are lesser citizens than others. In 2010, President Nicolas Sarkozy opened a



“great debate on national identity” which ended in total confusion. When people speak of national identity, they should be asked to provide the definition.

### *Avoiding generalisations*

In his *Ethics*, Spinoza criticises universal terms (II, 40). Because we are limited in conceiving multiple images, we confuse them in our mind under one attribute of the being or of the thing. The term used for naming these confused ideas is ‘universals’. For example, we speak of a man, of a dog or of a horse. The distinctive features of each man, each dog or each horse are subsumed under a common element that affects these entities. Moreover, the common element is not the same for different observers. For example, a human is said to be a standing animal or an animal capable of laughing or of reason.

This description also fits the term ‘migration’ well. In surveys, the term is used as a universal, but is likely understood differently by each person interviewed. To fight false ideas about migration, it is necessary to specify the different types of migration clearly rather than to rely on general statistics or to appeal immediately to human rights. Indeed, migration covers very different situations. To begin with, we have to distinguish between refugees, regular migration and irregular migration. Within each of these categories, the variety is large. For example, among the 260,000 permits issued by France in 2017, 88,000 were given to students, 90,000 for family reunification, 33,000 to asylum seekers, 28,000 for economic reasons, and 30,000 for diverse reasons. Within each category the diversity still remains great. For example, family reunification concerns 50,000 French families: many of these reunifications involved a foreign spouse of a French person, but 14,000 involved foreign spouses of foreign residents, 10,000 involved children of foreign residents and 16,000 involved people with “personal and family links with France”, which were, in fact, mostly regularisations of people working in France for a long time without a permit.

Cases concerning a limit on migration vary greatly according to the category.

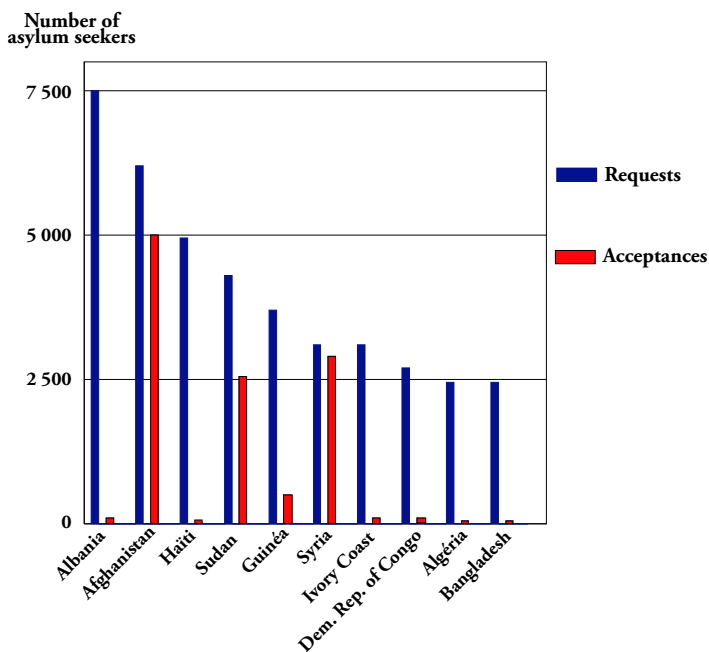
Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerns the reunification of couples, and of children with their parents. The freedom of marriage concerns mixed-nationality couples and its prohibition can be assimilated to a eugenic, or even racist, measure. Not performing regularisations leads to other problems, namely of public order.

To speak of ‘migrants’ confuses these issues. It is not only regular migration that involves a large variety of situations, but also refugees. Some come from countries devastated by civil war (Syria, Afghanistan), some from totalitarian countries (Eritrea), and some from partly safer countries (Nigeria, Guinea) or even safe ones (Albania). The level of persecution and the risk of losing one’s life, as well as the level of ethnic, religious and gender discrimination, varies greatly. As put forward by political philosophers, the alternatives to asylum should also be promoted. For example, refugees leaving Guinea can go freely to any other state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as there is free movement within this community. If other choices are offered, there is no necessity to opt for asylum in Europe.

### *Taking clear positions on the processes of migration*

One good example concerns asylum applications. Their handling raises two problems. First, some asylum applications are made by people whose life is not in danger, but who do not find a place in their own society for various reasons. Over the last ten years, the French asylum authority (OFPRA) has on average dismissed around 60% of these applications. A great contrast appears according to the country of origin, as shown on the Figure 10 for year 2017:<sup>16</sup>

Figure 10: Asylum requests and acceptances in 2017 in France, by nationality

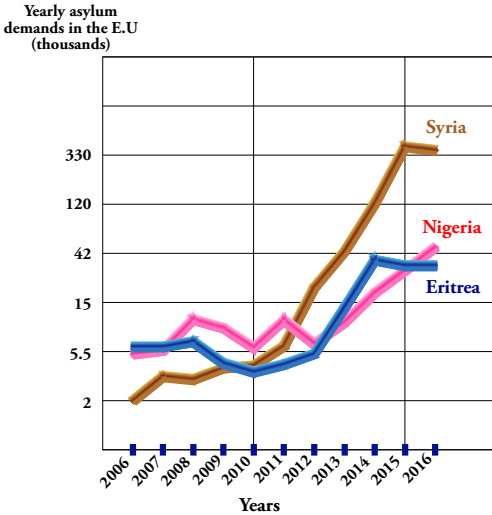


Source: Designed by the author with data from Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA), *A l'écoute du monde : rapport d'activité 2017*, Paris 2018.

Two kinds of countries are clearly visible: those where a civil war is raging (people from Afghanistan, Syria, and Sudan have a high rate of approval for their asylum applications); and countries where problems are less serious (people from Albania, Algeria, Ivory Coast or Bangladesh have a very low rate of approval for their asylum applications). The distinction between the two groups is not totally clear-cut, but it cannot be ignored. The life of people from the second group of countries is less at stake. Improperly, but not wrongly, a distinction is thus made between asylum and work migration.

This last point is highlighted by the quasi-simultaneous growth of the yearly number of people from Syria, Eritrea and Nigeria seeking asylum in the European Union in recent years, as seen on the Figure 11.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 11:** Yearly asylum requests in the EU (all countries) by Syrians, Eritreans and Nigerians



Source: Designed by the author with data from SOPEMI, *Perspectives des migrations internationales*, Paris 2018.

Before the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the number of asylum seekers from Eritrea and Nigeria was around 5,000 per year, and the number of those from Syria around 2,000. In 2012, asylum seekers from Syria grew to 20,000, but those from the other two countries remained at their usual number. One year later, asylum seekers from Eritrea and Nigeria then began to grow, reaching 40,000 in 2016. No reason can explain this fast growth except the opportunity to mix with the Syrian asylum seekers. Although it cannot be said that Eritreans and Nigerians have no good reasons to escape their countries, it can be supposed that their lives

were on the average less in peril than the lives of Syrians. In other words, the asylum seekers from Eritrea and Nigeria took advantage of the Syrian crisis. Asylum was refused to most of them, but they remained in the EU. A report in 2015 from the French Cour des comptes (Court of Auditors), the highest body in France evaluating the government's action, found that only 1% of those whose asylum was not granted had left France. The others became irregular migrants. This means that the work of OFPRA, which advises asylum seekers, is quite useless. It does not deal with real migration but with granting or refusing refugee status – a status which is more appealing than that of being irregular.

The issue of dealing with the rejected asylum seekers is difficult. When the decision to reject their application is made, they have already been in France for many months. Furthermore, the consulates of their country of origin do not recognise some of them, thus preventing their repatriation. If we want to fight populist arguments, we must clearly address this problem as populists say that all the people who enter the country, whether real or pseudo-refugees, then remain. The state must learn to make distinctions and close the door when this is necessary.

### *Distinguishing macro- and micro-level*

Like macro- and micro-economics, there are two different levels for tackling migration – the state and EU level on the one hand, and the local level on the other. At the state level, the long-term consequences of migration and the impact on the lifestyle of the local population are taken into account. At the local level, hospitality is provided on a short-term basis and in consideration of local needs (eg, maintaining business or schools). Nowadays, all decisions pertain to the macro-level. Yet more freedom is needed: freedom for the local population to choose whether to welcome migrants or not, freedom for migrants to choose their location inside France. In short, more democracy is needed. These remarks relate to the principle of affected interests (PAI) mentioned earlier.

## *Movement*

Until the end of 1973, people from Africa and the Maghreb could move freely between France and their own countries, but they could not work in France without a permit. Migrant workers from the Maghreb stayed for several years and then went back to their country, being replaced by people from their family or village for a similar medium-term stay. This system was called the *noria* – a reference to the water wheel used in northern Africa for irrigation. At the end of 1973, President Giscard closed the French borders and the migrants residing in France were trapped because they could no longer be replaced. They also had interest to stay for reasons of comparative advantage as they now owned something their fellow citizens in their country of origin had not and could no longer obtain – the possibility to reside in France.

The same is true for present day refugees or irregular migrants. It has taken them much money and risk to reach France. If they go back, this investment will be lost and if, after going back to their country, they want to return to France, a new costly investment has to be made. Restoring movement will help people move and not to stay if they do not find a decent life and work. Things are beginning to evolve in this direction. Of the 3 million visas issued by France in 2016, one-third, that is a million, were multi-entry.

### **Conclusion: The insider's point of view**

We have to weigh up the individual interests of migrating and the collective interests of receiving migrants. While the second part of this equation is often ignored by those promoting human rights, the first part is often ignored by populists from the far right. We must tackle the second part seriously and find simple answers. It is not an easy job. Three types of argument are usually put forward:

- **Communitarianism:** Immigrants can be refused because they threaten the freedom and justice of the national community

(Michael Walzer in his soft version<sup>18</sup>). The counterargument is to underline the impossible definition of the national community beyond laws and formal rules. We have to fight such inexpressible concepts as 'national identity'. Nations and moreover nation-states are well defined entities.

- Contractualism: In France, this is illustrated by the “contract of reception and integration (CAI)” introduced by President Chirac in 2002. In this view, one of the parties can reject the contract. The counterargument is to go back to the definition of a contract which postulates the equality of the two parties. But, clearly, the migrant and the French state are not on an equal footing.
- Institutionalism: This refers to the freedom of association. The nation is compared to a club whose members can reject the application of a new member. To challenge their right to do so is a violation of the freedom of association. The counterargument is that nations are not clubs and that most of their members are recruited at birth without an approval procedure by the citizens.

Of course, popular arguments are often cruder – competition on the job market, the cost of migrants, and illegal migrants, for example. Statistical or economic arguments have proved ineffective against such fancies. But we have no miracle solution to fight them. More work is needed.

## Notes

- 1 G. Tarde, *Les lois de l'imitation*, Paris 1890.
- 2 Ministère de l'Intérieur, *Les étrangers en France*, 2016, rapport au Parlement, Paris 2018; Ministère de l'intérieur, EM2018-17. La délivrance des premiers titres de séjour en 2017, Paris 2018.
- 3 H. Le Bras, *L'âge des migrations*, Paris 2017, p. 224.
- 4 B. Thomas, *Migration and economic growth: A study of Great Britain and the Atlantic economy*, Cambridge 1973.
- 5 H. Le Bras, *Le pari du FN*, Paris 2015.
- 6 H. Le Bras and J. Fourquet, *Le puzzle français. Un nouveau partage électoral*, Paris 2017, p. 182.
- 7 The French definition of immigré is somebody residing in France, born a foreigner and abroad.
- 8 H. Le Bras, *Le pari du FN*, op. cit.
- 9 M. Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, Paris 1932.
- 10 IFOP, Note for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Fondation Jean Jaurès concerning attitudes toward migrants in the EU, May 2017.
- 11 See for example John Dewey, *The political writings*, D. Morris, I. Shapiro (eds), Indianapolis/Cambridge 1993.
- 12 E. Laclau, C. Mouffe, *Populisme i hegemonia*, Buenos Aires 1985.
- 13 Assemblée nationale, avis 275 : *Immigration, asile, intégration*, rapporteur P.H. Dumont, 12 octobre 2017.
- 14 INSEE, *Immigrés et descendants d'immigrés*, INSEE, 2012, p.167.
- 15 H. Le Bras, *Anatomie sociale de la France*, Paris 2016.
- 16 OFPRA, *A l'écoute du monde : rapport d'activité 2017*, Paris 2018.
- 17 SOPEMI, *Perspectives des migrations internationales*, Paris 2018.
- 18 M. Walzer, *Thinking politically. Essays in political theory*, New Haven 2007.





# Sweden: Give people reasons for hope

LISA PELLING

## **The Swedish context: A long-term trend of decreasing xenophobia**

The Swedish election on 9 September 2018 resulted in a significant loss for the Social Democratic Party, which had been in government under Prime Minister Stefan Löfven together with the Green Party since 2014. The Social Democrats received 28.3% of the vote, their lowest share since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1918, while the Sweden Democrats, an openly xenophobic radical right-wing party increased their share from 12.8% in 2014 to 17.5%. They did this even though immigration is at a record low.

At the moment of writing (early December 2018), Stefan Löfven is leading a transitional government while negotiations to form a coalition government are still ongoing.

This contribution on the Swedish case explores the link between migration and public opinion in Sweden and draws some conclusions for Swedish social democracy as well as for progressive parties in Europe at large.

## **High levels of immigration**

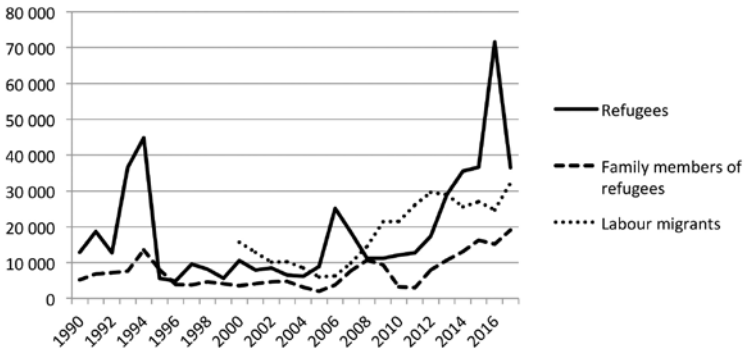
Today, Sweden stands out among other EU countries with a relatively large foreign-born population: in 2017, 18.5 % of the Swedish population had immigrated (Statistics Sweden 2018).<sup>1</sup> 1,877,050 were registered as born abroad, out of a population of 10,120,242). In the EU, the average share of foreign born was 7.2%.<sup>2</sup>

The relatively large share of foreign-born population is due both to substantial labour immigration (from the Nordic countries, from

other EU countries as well as from third countries), and to relatively large asylum immigration.

The figure below shows how asylum-related immigration peaked at the beginning of the 1990s, after which it decreased dramatically, to then increase continuously until 2015.

**Figure 1:** Residence permits granted for refugees and relatives of refugees 1990–2017, residence permits granted to labour migrants 2000–2017



Source: Swedish Migration Board 2018.

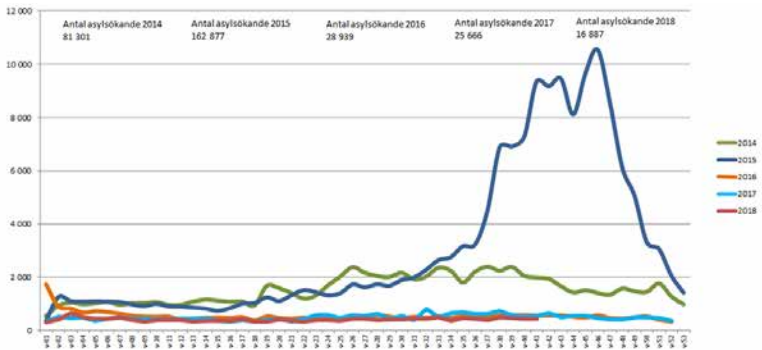
In 2014, Sweden received over 80,000 asylum applicants, the largest number since the previous peak during the Yugoslav civil wars in the 1990s. The following year, the number doubled and Sweden received the highest number of asylum seekers per capita of all EU countries (alongside Hungary)<sup>3</sup> in 2015. In total, Sweden received 163,000 asylum applicants in 2015, most of them over a period of a few months in the autumn of 2015. The top three countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. 70% of the applicants came from these three countries.

But towards the end of 2015, Swedish asylum policy changed abruptly and dramatically. In November 2015, the red-green government announced it would change Sweden’s asylum policy

to the strictest possible (that is, to the European minimum level) through a temporary law. The temporary law came into effect on 21 July 2016 but was used retroactively on all asylum applications made after 27 November 2015.

In addition to the temporary restriction of asylum legislation, in January 2016, Sweden introduced border controls on the border with Denmark. The introduction of border controls was a dramatic break not only with the principle of free cross-border movements under Schengen, but also a break with the principles of the Nordic passport-free union from 1953, a union that has in many ways defined the Nordic region. After these two changes, the number of asylum seekers dropped dramatically – from 163,000 in 2015 to 29,000 in 2016, and in 2018 the number will not exceed 23,000 according to the forecast of the Swedish Migration Board.

**Figure 2:** Number of asylum seekers 2014–2018



Source: Swedish Migration Board, October 2018.

Parallel to the restrictive turn in asylum policy, there has been an intensification of the debate on labour migration particularly from other EU states (most controversially, in the form of posted workers) but also from third countries. Since 2008, Sweden has had the most liberal legislation on labour migration from third

countries of all EU member states, with no restrictions in terms of numbers or level of qualification: Swedish employers are entitled to recruit ‘competence’ from abroad as long as they can guarantee the labour immigrants conditions that are equivalent to the conditions set in collective bargaining agreements in the relevant branch of the economy. This policy has worked reasonably well for highly qualified workers but has proven to offer too little protection to low-skilled workers.

### **A long-term trend of decreasing levels of xenophobia might have ended**

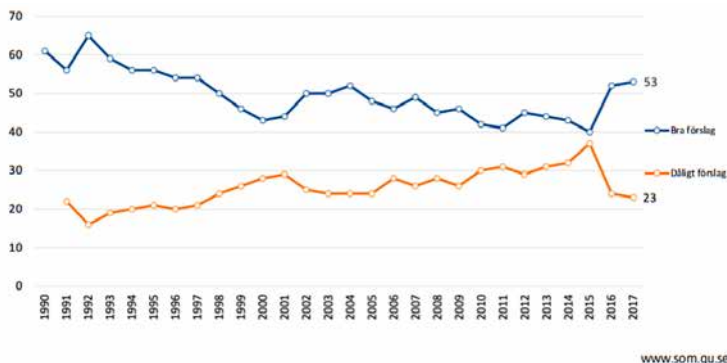
In European comparison, Sweden stands out as a country with exceptionally low anti-immigration attitudes. According to the Special Eurobarometer 469 on Integration of immigrants in the European Union, Sweden has the highest proportion of respondents who have generally positive perceptions about the impact of immigrants on society (76%). For instance, in Sweden the share of respondents who say they feel comfortable with having social relations with immigrants is 83% and higher than in all other countries (except Spain, which has the same share).<sup>4</sup>

The high level of welcoming attitudes towards migrants in Sweden (and the low level of hostile attitudes) can be attributed to a number of factors. Messing and Ságvári show in their analysis of data from the European Social Survey, that there are several factors that generally tend to be correlated with welcoming attitudes towards migrants.<sup>5</sup> On a macro level, these factors include high GDP per capita, high general levels of interpersonal trust and trust in institutions, as well as low levels of corruption.<sup>6</sup> On all these indicators, Sweden has a high score.

Anti-immigration sentiment has decreased over time in Sweden. An often-used long-term measurement of anti-immigration sentiment is the answer to the question “Should Sweden accept fewer refugees?”, which has been asked in a survey carried out annually

by the Institute of Government of Gothenburg University (SOM-institutet) for almost 30 years. When measurements began in 1990, the share of respondents who answered that it would be a good idea for Sweden to accept *fewer* refugees was over 60%. This share fell to a low of 40% in the spring of 2015, that is, after a record number of asylum seekers were received in Sweden in 2014. However, over the past three years, the share of people who think it would be a good idea for Sweden to receive *fewer* refugees has again increased to 53% (see illustration below).

**Figure 3:** Percentage who think "it would be a good idea for Sweden to receive fewer refugees" (blue) and percentage who think "it would be a bad idea for Sweden to receive fewer refugees" (red).



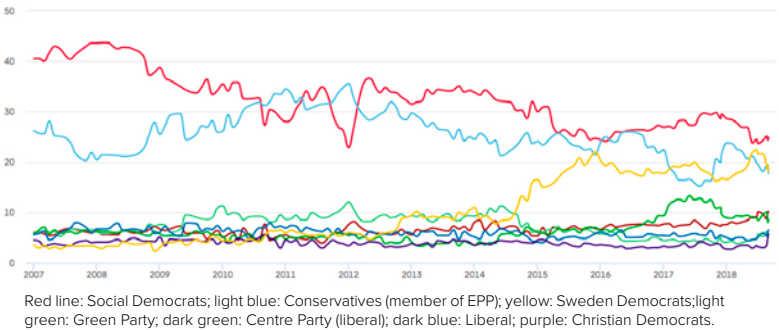
Source: M. Demker, *Opinion om migration och religion*, SOM-institutet, 2018.

For a long time, the dominating issue in the study of public opinion on migration in Sweden was to try and explain why public opinion became less and less antagonistic towards immigration, even though immigration increased.<sup>7</sup>

Over the last 15 years, low and decreasing levels of xenophobia have also been at odds with the steady rise in electoral support for the anti-immigration party, the Sweden Democrats. In 2002, the Sweden Democrats received only 1.4% of the vote in the parliamentary elections. But they more than doubled their support in the 2006 elections to 2.9%, and then doubled their percentage

again in 2010 when they entered parliament with 5.7% of the vote. In 2014, they received 12.9% of the vote, and in September 2018 they obtained 17.5%. For a long time, the levels of xenophobia were therefore decreasing but electoral support for the xenophobic party was increasing. How can this paradox be explained?

**Figure 4:** Support for Swedish political parties according to opinion polls 2007–2018 (September)



Source: DN/Ipsos 2018-09-06.

## Current state of affairs: The surge of the Sweden Democrats

### *Decline of class identification and decline of the left-wing dimension in politics*

Fifteen years ago, Sweden was still an exceptional case: in contrast to the other Nordic countries, in Sweden there was no successful radical right-wing party. At that time, Jens Rydgren, a leading expert on right-wing political parties (eg, Editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* published in 2018) argued that this was due to four main factors:

- 1) Social class still mattered more in Sweden than elsewhere. Working-class voters identified fairly strongly with their social class and with the Social Democratic Party, making them largely unavailable to radical right-wing mobilisation.

- 2) Partly as a result of this, socio-economic issues still structured most politics in Sweden, and issues belonging to the sociocultural dimension – most importantly immigration – were of low salience to voters.
- 3) There was a relatively low degree of convergence between the major mainstream parties, and voters still perceived clear policy alternatives across the left-right divide.
- 4) The leading radical right-wing alternative, the Sweden Democrats, was perceived as being too extreme.

Fifteen years later, Rydgren has returned to these factors. In a paper published in 2018, Rydgren and van der Meiden argue that a change in precisely these four factors can explain why Swedish ‘exceptionalism’ has now come to an end.<sup>8</sup>

Class politics in Sweden has declined, that is the tendency to vote according to class interests. An example of this tendency is declining support for the Social Democratic Party among members of trade unions belonging to the blue-collar trade union confederation LO. According to data from exit polls at the national elections, support for the Social Democrats among LO-affiliated trade union members decreased from 80% in 1956 to 52% in 2010.<sup>9</sup> In this election, it reached a new low with only 41%.<sup>10</sup> Since 2010, support for the Sweden Democrats among blue-collar workers has increased from 3% in 2006 to 26% in 2018.

When people vote according to class interests, the dominant cleavages in politics are between labour and capital, or between employees and employers. Dominant issues concern the role of the state in the economy (whether the state should tax more or less; to what extent the state should regulate or control private enterprises, etc.) “As long as the traditional class-based cleavage dominated”, Rydgren and van der Meiden argue, “there was little room for competing cleavage dimensions”. With the declining



strength of the Social Democratic Party, its hold on the working class has declined, too, and left room for parties to mobilise voters also along socio-cultural dimensions.

The Sweden Democrats are, like other radical right-wing parties, clearly at the lowest end of the GAL-TAN scale.<sup>11</sup> They mobilise voters primarily by taking a clear and very strict stance on immigration. Voters do not doubt where Sweden Democrats stand on this issue. All other parties who change their immigration policy in a more repressive direction risk coming across as copycats of the Sweden Democrats. An illustration of this is this year's election campaign, in which the Sweden Democrats did not put any slogan or main demand on their posters. Instead, they confidently campaigned with one simple message: SD 2018.

**Figure 5:** Election posters of the Sweden Democrats 2018.



Credit: Barbro Bergfeldt / Alamy Stock Photo

Another factor that has contributed to the rise of the radical right in Sweden is the fact that the two traditional parties, the Social Democrats to the left and the conservative party Moderaterna to the right, have both moved towards the centre. This concentration in the centre has blurred the distinction between left and right, and between policy alternatives along the left-right divide. This in turn has contributed to an enhanced focus on socio-cultural issues, in particular through a politicisation of the immigration issue.

Finally, over the last 15 years, the Sweden Democrats have succeeded in erecting a relatively respectable façade, thereby attracting voters who were previously put off by the Sweden Democrats' extremism and Nazi roots.

### **Economic shocks and the politics of discontent**

Recently, a team of researchers has made a very valuable contribution to the understanding of the rise of the Sweden Democrats by conducting a socio-economic analysis of the political candidates of the Sweden Democrats and by comparing them to the political candidates of the other political parties.

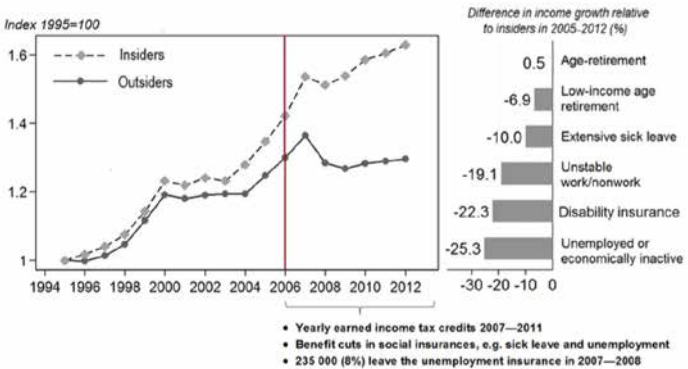
Ernesto Dal Bó, Frederico Finan, Olle Folke, Torsten Persson, and Johanna Rickne<sup>12</sup> have used uniquely rich data. They have been able to access register data for all political candidates (all elected and non-elected individual candidates running for national or municipal political office during the period 1982-2010): annual earnings, level of education, occupation, etc. Using this data, they show how the increase in electoral support for the Sweden Democrats can be related to two economic events over the past ten years: 1) the 'make-work-pay' economic policies carried out by the centre-right government that was in power from 2006 to 2014; 2) the 2008-09 financial crisis.

A central feature of the policy reforms of the centre-right government was to introduce labour-income tax cuts in the form of

earned income tax credits (EITC). With this policy, disposable income increased substantially for ‘insiders’ with a job. At the same time, the government tightened both payments from and access to social security for ‘outsiders’, such as access to unemployment benefit and sick-leave, a kind of austerity benefit. This increased the cleavage between insiders and outsiders, and between winners and losers of the economic reforms.

It is important to note that the loss was often not absolute (that is, a loss of disposable income). But even a *relative* loss can breed resentment and discontent.

**Figure 6:** Widening gaps between labour market ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ 1995–2012



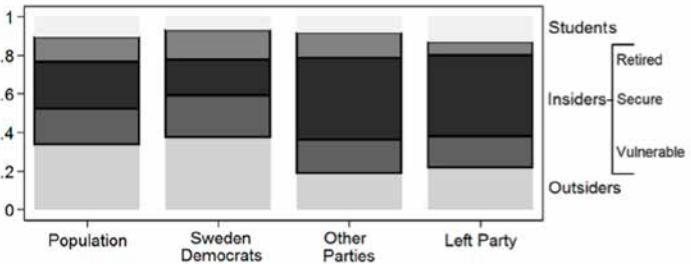
Source: E. Dal Bó, F. Finan, O. Folke, T. Persson, J. Rickne, *Economic losers and political winners: Sweden's radical right*, UC-Berkeley 2018.

The financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 increased the risk of vulnerable insiders losing their job, and thereby produced ‘losers’ also among the ‘insiders’.

Dal Bó et al. show that both losing groups, outsiders as well as vulnerable insiders, are over-represented among the candidates for the Sweden Democrats, whereas they are under-represented among the candidates for all other parties,

including the candidates for the Social Democrats and the Left Party. Looking at the election results district by district, Dal Bó et al. find that an increase in the income gap between insiders and outsiders, as well as an increase in the share of “vulnerable insiders”, is systematically associated with larger electoral gains for the Sweden Democrats.

**Figure 7:** Composition of Swedish population compared to representatives of Sweden Democrats, the Left Party and all other parties, average 2002–2012



Source: Dal Bó et al.

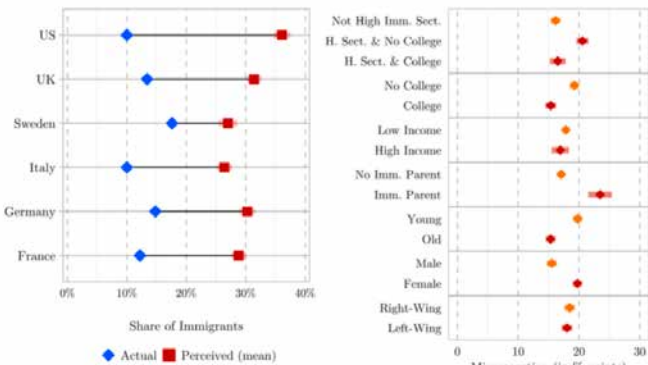
According to the researchers, this effect might be explained by an identification effect. In the first phase, losers lose trust in established parties, and some become candidates for the anti-establishment party the Sweden Democrats. In the second phase, other relative losers feel represented by their peers among the Sweden Democrat candidates.

It is likely that the Sweden Democrats managed to exploit discontent among relative economic losers also in the 2018 election (although this one factor cannot explain their entire support).<sup>13</sup> The Social Democrats have lost most heavily in municipalities where unemployment is high, and where the number of days of sick leave per person is also high.<sup>14</sup> The higher the number of unemployed, and the higher the number of days on sick leave per person, the higher the loss for the Social Democrats.

## There is no straight connection between the share of immigrants and anti-immigration attitudes

Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva find a striking discrepancy between perceptions of the number of immigrants and the actual size of the immigrant population. In five of the countries surveyed by Alesina et al., the average respondent thinks that the share of immigrants is at least twice as high as it really is. In Alesina et al.'s survey, Swedish respondents were the most accurate, but still far from correct: the average Swedish respondent put the number at 27%, when the actual number is 17.6% (see Figure 8 below).<sup>15</sup>

Figure 8: Perceived vs actual share of immigrants



Source: A. Alesina, A. Miano, S. Stantcheva, *Immigration and Redistribution*, NBER Working Paper 24733, 2018, p. 21.

Note: The left panel shows the average perceived share of immigrants (red squares) and the actual share (blue diamonds) in each country. The right panel shows the average misperception (perceived minus actual share) of the share of immigrants by groups. Groups are defined by the indicator variables listed to the left: the mean when the indicator is equal to 1 is represented by the orange or red diamonds. The shaded areas are 95% confidence intervals around the mean.

Crucially, Alesina et al. show that respondents misperceive not only the total share of immigrants in their country, but also their origins and religion. Respondents have an exaggerated perception of the

number of immigrants from the Middle East and overestimate the share of Muslims among immigrants.

This has implications for the attitudes on migration in general, since people tend to have different attitudes towards different kinds of migrants. According to a recent survey,<sup>16</sup> Swedes have a much more positive view of labour migrants and students than of refugees. The least favourable attitudes are towards the family members of migrants. In Sweden, family members of asylum migrants dominate in this group.

**Table 1:** Perceptions of different kinds of migrants (percent)

People coming to Sweden ...	Very negative	Quite negative	Neither positive nor negative	Quite positive	Very positive	Balance measure
... to escape war and oppression						
2014	3	9	22	30	36	+54
2015	4	9	24	30	24	+51
2016	4	9	25	30	33	+50
... to work						
2014	2	5	18	34	42	+69
2015	2	4	17	35	42	+71
2016	1	4	18	36	41	+72
... to study						
2014	1	2	17	37	43	+77
2015	1	3	19	37	41	+74
2016	1	3	18	39	41	+77
... to be reunited with family members						
2014	9	14	27	27	24	+28
2015	9	14	30	25	22	+24
2016	9	14	29	25	23	+25
Number of responses: 2,254. The balance measure is calculated by subtracting the percentage giving negative responses from the percentage giving positive responses.						

Source: J. Strömbeck, N. Theorin, *Attitudes towards immigration: An analysis of changes and media effects in Sweden 2014-2016*, Delmi Report 4, 2018.

Whereas Swedes tend to be less prone to overestimate the number of people born abroad than those surveyed in other European countries, voters of the xenophobic Sweden Democrats (SD) systematically overestimate their number. This is particularly true for immigrants from the Middle East.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to remember that a lot of debate about ‘immigrants’ is not about immigrants per se – but about visible minorities. It is useful to distinguish between ‘anti-immigration’ attitudes, and ‘anti-migrant’ positions. People may oppose certain immigration policies (eg, labour immigration that leads to a downward pressure on wages and working conditions) without being ‘anti-migrant’.

### **Shocking events**

Even though there is indeed no straight connection between numbers of immigrants and anti-immigrant sentiment or support for anti-immigration parties, it is clear that the attitudes to immigration have been influenced by two dramatic, migration-related events: one is the doubling of the number of asylum applicants in 2015, most of whom arrived over a very short period of time during the autumn of 2015. It is reasonable to expect that the increase but also the numbers in themselves changed people’s propensity to answer that it would be a good idea for Sweden to accept fewer refugees. That the events in 2015 had a significant effect is clear from Figure 15 below on the influence of opinions on refugee reception on party sympathy.

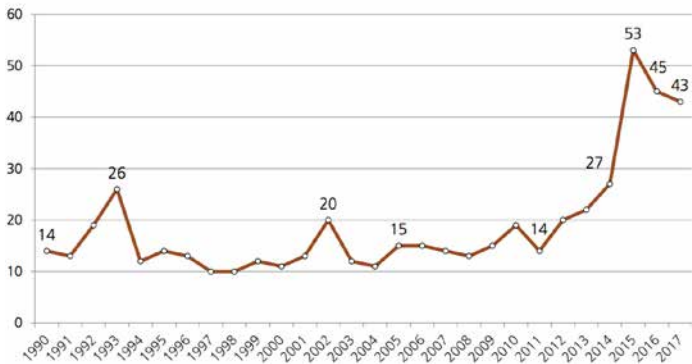
Another significant event is the terror attack in Stockholm on 7 April 2017. The ISIS-inspired terrorist who drove a heavy lorry down the main shopping street of Stockholm and killed five people was a former asylum seeker who was in Sweden without a residence permit. It is no surprise that the party that always argues that all rejected asylum seekers are potential terrorists would be able to increase its support after such an event.

## The radical right's increasing power of mobilisation

Marie Demker, a political scientist at the University of Gothenburg, describes political support as a function both of values/opinions in the electorate *and* the ability to capitalise on those values/opinions through political mobilisation. Demker argues that an important part of the explanation for the electoral success of the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats lies with their increasing capacity to mobilise the xenophobic vote.<sup>18</sup>

The reasons for this increased power of mobilisation are manifold. One of the most important reasons is that voters attach increasing importance to immigration issues (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9:** Share of people who spontaneously list immigration and/or integration as "the most important issue(s) in Sweden today"



Source: Demker 2018.

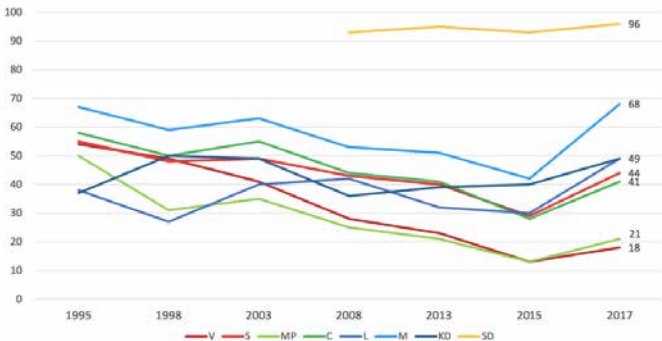
As other parties become more aware of xenophobia as an issue of (potential) political division, they become 1) more outspoken on the issue, 2) more intolerant towards xenophobic views within their respective parties. This propels people who attach importance to their xenophobic/anti-immigration opinions to change parties.



The success of other, similar parties in other parts of Europe has also helped the Sweden Democrats to become more professional in their mobilisation efforts. The Front National in France and FPÖ in Austria have provided both inspiration and concrete support. Today, Hungary is where anti-immigration party leaders go on pilgrimage. A number of former leading Sweden Democrats now live in Budapest. There is also ample documentation of close links between the radical right milieu in Sweden and the alt-right movement in the US.<sup>19</sup>

It is very clear that voters of the Sweden Democrats are defined by their aversion to immigration. Figure 10 below shows the share of people who think it would be a good idea for Sweden to accept fewer refugees on political party preference. Social Democratic voters (S) show a sharp decline in the share of supporters with anti-immigration preferences (although the trend has been reversed since 2015), whereas the Sweden Democrat voters (SD) have stayed more or less the same since 2008: over 95% of SD voters think it would be a good idea for Sweden to receive fewer refugees.

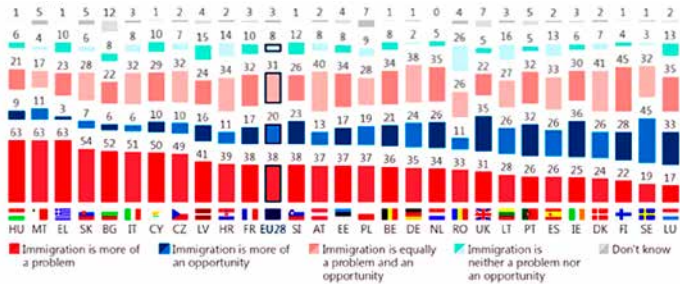
**Figure 10:** Opinion on refugee reception on party sympathy 1995–2017 (%)



Source: SOM Institute, Gothenburg University 2018.

According to the Eurobarometer survey, in 2017, even less than a fifth of respondents in Sweden (19%) saw immigration mainly as a problem, compared with over six in ten (63%) in Hungary, Malta and Greece. Swedes have the highest level of people saying “opportunity” and the second lowest saying “problem” in their answers – see Figure 11 below.<sup>20</sup> What is particularly relevant, according to Demker, is the mix between seeing immigration “mainly as a problem” *and* thinking that immigration is “the main problem” in society *and* considering that there is only one political party alternative if you hold these views.

**Figure 11:** Answers to the question, “Generally speaking, do you think immigration from outside the EU is more of a problem or more of an opportunity for your country today?”



Source: Eurobarometer 2018, p. 58.

## The limits of successful integration

Economically, Sweden is doing well. Unemployment is low, employment figures are high, economic growth is well above the European average, the trade balance shows a huge plus, and there is a surplus in public finances. In this year’s Human Development Index, Sweden had climbed from number 14 to number 7.<sup>21</sup>

This picture is very much at odds with the picture of Sweden and ‘the state the country is in’ painted by anti-immigration political forces, in Sweden and abroad. Since 2015, when Sweden

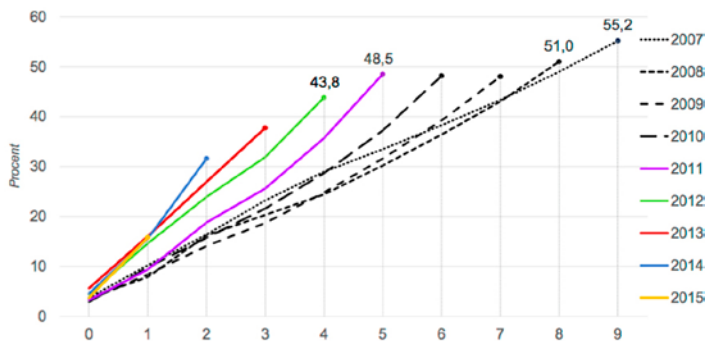
received 163,000 asylum seekers in a single year, the Sweden Democrats and others (notably US President Trump), for example, have described Sweden as a country on the verge of economic and societal collapse.

As political scientist Peo Hansen has shown, the favourable economic situation of Sweden can in fact be partly attributed to the refugee situation of 2015 and 2016, since increased government spending in order to cater for the refugees has had a Keynesian effect on economic growth and employment.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the integration of immigrants, Sweden seems also to be doing well – at least in comparison with other European and OECD countries.<sup>23</sup> Even though Sweden has a relatively high share of foreign-born population, with many having arrived quite recently, the share of the total population in employment is the highest ever measured in an OECD country. In Sweden, immigrants are integrated into the labour market to a higher extent than native women in Italy or Greece.

In addition, integration measures seem to be improving in efficiency. For the refugees arriving in Sweden in 2007, it took more than eight years before half of them had started working. For the cohort of refugees arriving in 2011, it took five years. And more than 40% of the refugees who arrived in 2012 were employed after four years. The curve is steeper and steeper year by year: integration is taking place faster and faster (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12:** Share of employed refugees received 2007–2015 (Y-axis) on number of years after arrival (X-axis)



Source: Statistics Sweden, Presentation made by Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson at the bi-annual government conference at Harsund on 16 August 2018.

The reasons for this positive development are many, including improved language training, enhanced labour market introduction programmes (such as targeted wage subsidies), a favourable macroeconomic situation, etc.<sup>24</sup>

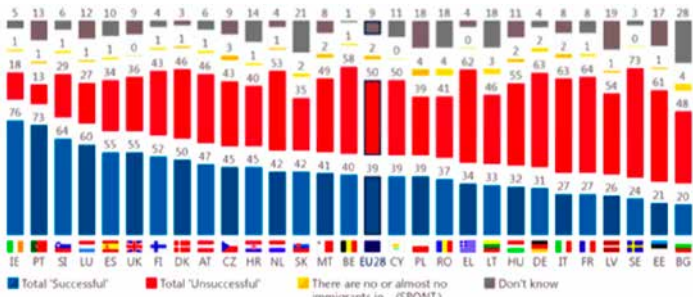
Messing and SÁgvári show in their analysis of data from the European Social Survey that the extent and quality of inclusion policies correlate strongly with the acceptance of immigrants.<sup>25</sup>

Functioning integration is certainly a necessary basis for a credible, long-term liberal immigration policy. But one lesson to be drawn from the Swedish case is that successful integration is not on its own enough to contain anti-immigration parties, as long as these parties can capitalise on remaining problems and challenges related to integration.

In Sweden, these challenges include high rates of violent crime in segregated neighbourhoods with a large share of immigrants. However, it is an exaggeration to suggest that there are ‘no-go zones’ in Sweden.

According to the Special Eurobarometer published in April 2018, and compared to the EU average, Swedes are much more likely to consider immigration an opportunity (40% vs 20% EU average) but are – paradoxically – less optimistic about integration. Swedes are also more likely than others to think that their government is not doing enough to foster the integration of immigrants. Whereas in Austria (72%) and Portugal (69%) over two-thirds say that enough is being done to foster integration, in Sweden and the United Kingdom less than four in ten respondents think so (both 39%). Less than a quarter (24%) of respondents in Sweden agree that integration has been successful, while nearly three-quarters (73%) think that integration has been unsuccessful.

**Figure 13:** Answer to the question “Generally speaking, how successful or not is the integration of most immigrants living in your country?”



Source: Eurobarometer 2018, p. 65.

There are several possible reasons for this relative discontent.

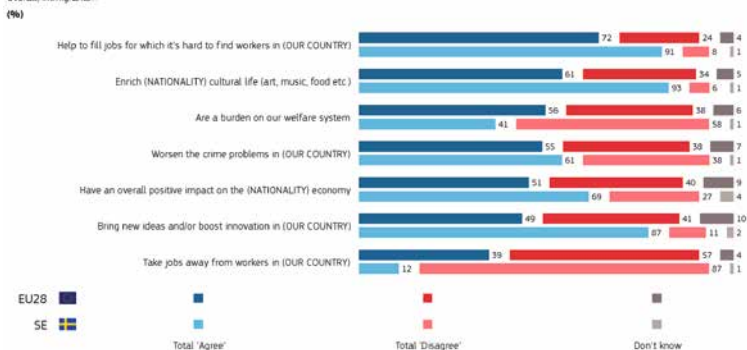
- 1) The integration challenge has a different magnitude in Sweden than in many other countries, since the immigrant population is relatively larger, and a large share of the immigrant population has arrived in Sweden quite recently.
- 2) There might also be an effect related to high(er) expectations: in Sweden, the integration of immigrants has been a very topical

issue, and politicians from all sides have tried to rally support for their own integration policies, by arguing that integration has not been successful enough.

In general, the Eurobarometer picture of attitudes towards integration is that Swedes feel strongly about integration. They are (much) more confident than most others about the opportunities connected to migration, but they are also less satisfied with how these opportunities are nurtured. Swedes are much more confident about immigrants' contribution to fill jobs (91% vs 72% on average in the EU) and enrich cultural life (93% vs 61% EU average). Far fewer Swedes than other EU nationals think immigrants are a burden on the welfare system (41% vs 56 %), despite the fact that the Swedish welfare system does not discriminate between citizens and other residents. At the same time, Swedes stand out as those who feel most strongly (99%) that it is important that immigrants “feel like a member of society” for their integration to be successful. High expectations, and high demands.

**Figure 14:** Views regarding the impact of immigrants in Sweden vs EU average

There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on society in (OUR COUNTRY) To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Overall, immigrants.



Source: Sweden Factsheet, Special Eurobarometer 469, 2018.

## A repressive tilt

An analysis of public opinion and migration cannot only concern the support for radical right-wing anti-immigration parties. It must also look at how the support for anti-immigration and anti-immigrant ideas has changed the policies of other political parties. In Sweden, the largest mainstream political party to the right on the political spectrum, the conservative Moderaterna, has radically changed its position on immigration. Between 2010 and 2014, the right-wing government led by Moderaterna negotiated its immigration policy with the Green Party, which at that time (with the possible exception of the Left Party) represented the most liberal view on migration of all parties. In the election campaign of 2014, the Moderaterna party leader Fredrik Reinfeldt, who was then also Sweden's prime minister, asked people to "open their hearts" to immigration. But this position has now changed: after the dramatic autumn of 2015, Moderaterna asked for a "stop on refugees" and opened up for informal talks and co-operation with the Sweden Democrats.

The Social Democrats have also clearly moved in a more restrictive direction. Before the election in 2014, the Social Democrats promised to respect the agreement on migration policy that had been negotiated between the right-wing government and the Green Party. So in the election campaign of 2014, the only party that argued for a more restrictive immigration policy was the Sweden Democrats.

Then came the autumn of 2015, and a much more restrictive migration policy was introduced by the Social Democrats and the Green Party in November 2015. In May 2018, the Social Democrats presented a new migration policy:

- The temporary restrictive asylum law from 2016 will be prolonged until new, common EU rules are in place.

- Border controls will remain “as long as they are needed”.
- Central reception centres for asylum seekers will be built, and there will be limitations on where asylum seekers can settle; detention centres will be expanded.
- The time before a renewed asylum application can be made after refusal will be doubled, and social support to refused asylum seekers/un-documented migrants will be banned.<sup>26</sup>

It is a matter of discussion to what extent this policy is a necessary response to the events of 2015 and their effect on public opinion on migration, or an adaptation of the Social Democratic policies to those of the Sweden Democrats, or both.

It is striking how little attention is paid in Swedish debate to the Swedish position on larger European migration issues. Even though the Social Democratic policy refers explicitly to the need for a sustainable EU-level policy, there is (currently) no indication on the party’s website or in any published programme as to what the Social Democrats would like these policies to look like. The party asks for a common European asylum system based on “responsibility and solidarity”, for increased EU aid to improve conditions in refugee camps outside Europe, and for more repatriation agreements to be signed. Sweden’s ambition should be to “push for other countries to enhance their capacity to receive and integrate migrants, in order to achieve a better international management of migration” (Social Democrats, 4 May 2018).

### **Recommendations: Progressives must give people reasons for hope**

In Sweden, anti-immigration sentiment has decreased over time, even though Sweden has experienced rapidly growing numbers of immigrants. At the same time, despite this decrease of



anti-immigration attitudes, the anti-immigration party, the Sweden Democrats, has received growing electoral support.

How can this be explained?

Firstly, the Swedish example confirms that anti-immigration *sentiment* is not necessarily triggered by growing numbers of immigrants.

Secondly, the rise of anti-immigration *political parties* cannot be easily explained by a rising number of migrants or even by rising anti-immigration opinions.

Instead, the recent Swedish experience of changes in public support for anti-immigration policies shows that progressive parties have to deal with a complex interplay of different factors. These include, in the Swedish case:

- 1) Resentment and discontent among the relative losers of recent neo-liberal economic policies that have produced widening gaps between labour market insiders on the one hand, and outsiders who depend on social benefits, on the other hand. This has fed increasing discontent and distrust in established parties.
- 2) Remaining underlying anti-immigration and racist sentiment in the population has made it possible to mobilise this discontent for policies that aim at redistribution from immigrants to natives, rather than from the rich to the poor.
- 3) A failure of the progressive left to mobilise the social discontent for left wing policies, not least because the difference between left and right economic policies has been blurred as established parties have moved to the centre. At the same time, the radical right has increased its mobilising power (through internal and external funding, manipulation of social media, etc.) and its capacity to turn discontent and resentment into electoral gains.

The conclusions are also manifold.

- 1) Progressive parties must pursue radical policies for increased equality. We cannot accept widening gaps between insiders and outsiders, and we need to fight relentlessly against economic policies that breed discontent and resentment among ordinary people.
- 2) Progressive parties cannot give up on our long-term struggle against racism, xenophobia and inward-looking nationalism. Labour parties have everything to lose and nothing to gain from policies that pit workers against workers.
- 3) Progressive parties must work to re-focus the political debate on the left vs right or the redistribution vs corporate interests dimension. At the same time, the mobilising power of the radical right must be contained concretely by new transparency regulations on party funding, increased protection against the manipulation of social media (eg, through bots) and protection against interference with election systems.

Overarching this strategy, there is a need to formulate a long-term progressive vision of open, inclusive societies that build social cohesiveness on the basis of diversity.

### **Tentative conclusion for the Swedish case**

The Swedish Social Democrats need to:

- Form a long-term strategy to decrease xenophobic sentiment in the population. The trend of the past decades gives cause for optimism: xenophobia has decreased; tolerant attitudes have grown. But as this chapter shows, as long as there is still anti-immigration and racist sentiment in the population, this can and will be exploited by right-wing populists and by the radical right. It is imperative that Social Democrats do not confirm these views.

Social Democrats must not contribute to giving the impression that the main conflict in society is between liberal immigration policies and the protection of vulnerable natives. We need to insist that the main conflict is between labour and capital, and that the main policy choices are between enhanced redistribution on the one hand, and more freedom for market forces on the other;

- Have a short-term strategy to win elections despite increasing importance attached to anti-immigration policies by voters. This policy must be rooted in Social Democratic ideology, in order to be credible to the voters. People's security is central: Social Democrats must put a priority on fighting precarity on the labour and housing markets, on restoring confidence in the pension system and trust in the ability of the education system to give every child the opportunity to lead a decent life. To focus on these issues will also help re-focus the political debate on the left-right dimension;
- Have a long-term, inspiring and hopeful vision of open, welcoming and integrative societies – societies that are heterogeneous but cohesive, that are open to the world but self-confident about their identity. This is not just a demographic imperative for ageing societies, but also essential for the building of an inclusive, progressive society.

### **Tentative European long-term conclusions**

The starting point for progressive migration policies must be that migration is a part of the human condition. It has always been part of human history, and people will continue to move across countries and continents in the future. Migration cannot be stopped, but it can be managed in a way that maximises its benefits: for those who move, for the countries and communities they leave, and for the countries and communities that receive them.

First of all, we need to ask ourselves what is the possible scope of policy on migration to Europe? That is, what can we do, what can

we not do, what would be the consequences if policies fail, or if we fail to have a policy?

1) **Well-managed immigration is good for Europe.** Europe will need labour immigration to care for and replace an ageing population, and to recruit competences on the global labour market. That is, a demand for labour from abroad will continue to exist. If this demand cannot be met by regular, legal labour migration, it will be met by irregular migration. This has at least two very serious consequences: one is that an increase of irregular migration will breed corruption and organised crime along the external borders of the EU, making it both costlier and more difficult to control the borders in the future. The same is true for refugee policy. If Europe fails to make sure that people who are forced to flee their homes can get protection in neighbouring countries, we must provide legal avenues to seek protection in Europe. If we fail to provide legal avenues (such as quota systems, humanitarian visas, etc.), desperate refugees will be forced to use their savings to finance the smuggler industry, putting their safety at risk, and feeding organised crime and corruption.

2) **Closure is not an option.** Even if we wanted to, it is not possible to close Europe completely to immigration. And even if we did tomorrow, we still have to deal with increasingly culturally, linguistically and religiously heterogeneous societies. If we attempt to close Europe completely we will 1) fail; 2) pay a high price in human lives (not least because mounting pressures along the borders will sooner or later lead to new, dramatic and deadly situations); 3) shatter Europe's image in the eyes of the rest of the world; and 4) pay a high price in the form of internalised xenophobia as we turn inwards and cultivate fear instead of openness.

3) **Don't feed the monster, and don't be copycats, people will vote for the original.** In a situation when support for repressive policies is increasing, it is tempting also for progressive parties to try to win elections by adopting a repressive rhetoric or even

programme. Such a strategy is bound to fail: people will have their prejudices confirmed and strengthened, and in the end, they will probably prefer the repressive, anti-immigration originals to some newly awakened copycats. There is a danger also that progressive parties might be tempted to *pretend* to be strict, while the policies they pursue (or intend to pursue) are in fact pragmatic, acknowledging that fact that immigration is good for our economies and societies. This risks creating deep mistrust among voters (Stephen Castles has written extensively on this)<sup>27</sup> who expect politicians to deliver on their promises of strict policies, and who indeed might expect politicians to realise ‘zero immigration’. An increasingly repressive view of migration also risks turning refugees into nothing but perceived security threats, and their aspirations towards a better life to be turned into an economic burden.

**4) Prevent dramatic situations.** A lesson to be learned from Sweden post-2015 is that dramatic, chaotic situations can undo what years and decades of successful integration and successful work against racism and xenophobia has achieved. Pictures of overcrowded shelters, thousands of people queuing at border crossings, policemen hoarding refugees while wearing face masks as protection (from what, smell? Infectious disease?) trigger people’s fears. Because we desperately need pragmatic management of migration in order to prevent uncontrollable situations, progressive parties should consider making migration policy an area of deepened co-operation between a limited number of member states, like the Schengen area co-operation. At the moment, we cannot afford to give a right of veto to non-constructive governments, like those presently in power in Hungary, Italy and Slovakia, for instance.

**5) The regulation of migration must encompass labour migrants and refugees as well as unwanted migrants.** The regulation of migration should be built on three pillars:

- The first pillar is labour migration to meet legitimate demand for competence and manpower. It is unacceptable that this kind of demand for labour cannot be met through regular labour immigration today, forcing both employers and employees to rely on and support criminal networks in order to enter the European labour markets. It is not legitimate to use foreign labour to lower wages and working conditions. The protection against this kind of abuse will have to look differently in different European countries, but this is not an excuse not to develop common, European policies on regular labour immigration.
- The second pillar is the right to asylum. The right to asylum cuts across whatever regulation there is on other kinds of migration. The right to asylum must be upheld, regardless of the economic situation or the level of unemployment. The right to asylum forms an indispensable part of the defence for universal human rights.
- The third pillar is a humanitarian strategy to deal with unwanted migration. No matter how successful we are in building a system for regular labour immigration, or offering protection to refugees, as long as migration is regulated (and it should continue to be, I think), there will be unwanted migrants. We cannot simply let irregular migrants drown and let human rights *acquis* such as maritime codes on rescue at sea drown with them.

**6) We need a long-term progressive vision.** A progressive strategy must be based on a long-term vision of Europe as a welcoming continent, which is open to legal, orderly and safe migration. A vision will not be enough, but it is necessary. And we need to talk about it in order to inspire people to confide in it. The direction must be to strive towards ever increasing openness. It is understandable that the mantra of the last couple years of all leading political parties in Sweden (and in neighbouring countries) has been “we must not repeat the autumn of 2015”. But this is insufficient as a vision for progressive parties. Obviously, human mobility or migration is not the answer to all problems.

The right to stay in your home community and your home country, and to have opportunities for local development is just as important as the right to mobility. But at the same time, human mobility is about realising some of the core values of social democracy: freedom, equality, solidarity. Freedom to move from places where your opportunities and those of your loved ones are stunted or constrained. Mobility is a part of the struggle for equality between those that have had the luck to be born in a prosperous place, and those that happened to grow up in a poor place. A progressive policy for human mobility must strive to take steps – pragmatic, reformist steps – towards eradicating inequality produced by geography.





## Notes

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- 13 Data from Eurobarometer also indicate that people with a more vulnerable economic situation are less likely to think that integration has been successful: "Less than half of those who have difficulty paying their bills most of the time (47%) agree that integration of immigrants has been a success, compared with 56% of those who almost never or never have this problem. Eurobarometer 2017, p. 66.

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# The political backlash: Scotland within the context of the United Kingdom

SARAH KYAMBI

## Context

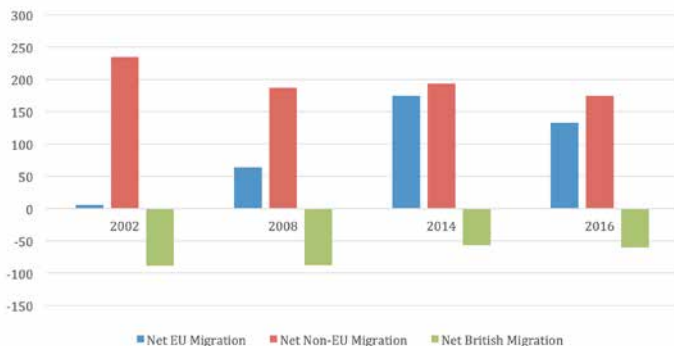
This contribution occupies a rather peculiar place. The United Kingdom's imminent exit from the European Union (EU) means no EU elections will be held in the United Kingdom (UK) next May. So why include the UK case? The answer is that this contribution focuses mainly on Scotland within the context of the UK. The rationale is that Scotland provides an exception to the general trend in immigration politics across Europe. Both political debate and policy suggestions on immigration remain positive with an emphasis on welcoming migrants and the benefits they bring. It is worth considering what factors have contributed to this and what progressives can learn from the Scottish experience.

To provide some context, the UK's foreign-born population stood at 7.3 million in 2011 comprising 13% of the total, the respective figures for Scotland are 369,284 and 7%. These figures have continued to rise. The UK has a long history of immigration, including substantial migration from its former empire in the post-war period. Nevertheless, the country has experienced significant changes in its migrant population in recent decades. For one there has been a marked increase with the foreign-born population, which rose from 4.6 million (9%) in 2001. Equally importantly, migratory patterns have changed, with a diversification of migrant origins and migrant settlement patterns. Net migration from the European Union has risen steadily, while non-EU migration has declined somewhat. Illustrating this shift in the origins of the migrant population, Poles are now the largest group in both Scotland and the UK as a whole, overtaking the numbers from Pakistan and India as the single largest country of origin (although migration from outside the EU continues to remain higher overall than EU migration).

In contrast to many EU member states, recent immigration debates in the UK are dominated by labour migration, with the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK remaining comparatively low. Instead the decision to allow immediate access to its labour markets for nationals of Poland and the seven other ex-communist countries that joined the EU in 2004 is arguably the definitive moment in UK immigration policy for the last decade and a half. With most other EU member states (apart from Ireland and Sweden) delaying labour market access, there was significant immigration into the UK from the 2004 EU accession states. Immigrants from these countries also departed from previous migrant settlement patterns when they came to live and work in areas of the UK that had had limited prior experience of migration, rather than concentrating in towns with significant co-ethnic, co-national populations.

Rising immigration from the 2004 accession states plays a key role in the shift in Scotland from a country of emigration to one of immigration in the early 2000s. Immigration also plays a key role in reversing the continual downward trend in Scotland's population since the mid-1970s. In terms of the purpose of migration, the composition of migrant inflows in the previous decades shows that immigrants come to the UK mainly to work or study with other reasons far less prevalent (13% of total inflows in 2017). EU migrants dominate among those coming to work, while those coming to study are mainly non-EU citizens.

**Figure 1:** Net migration to the UK by citizenship (thousands) 2002- 2016



Source: Long term international migration data, Office for National Statistics.

Since 2010, UK immigration policy has been dominated by a net migration target which seeks to reduce migration to the ‘tens of thousands’, implementing an electoral campaign promise by David Cameron.<sup>1</sup> Net migration continues to be well in excess of this figure (282,000 in 2017) and it is unlikely that reducing migration by this extent is either possible or desirable, particularly considering the target includes student and family migration. To emphasise the difference in Scotland: a recent Scottish Government discussion paper recommends the migration target be dropped or that migrants to Scotland be exempted from it.<sup>2</sup>

Under the devolution settlement which set up the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government in 1998, immigration is one of the areas reserved to the UK Government at Westminster. Nonetheless, over time increasing policy divergence has become apparent on immigration matters. For example, on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers, different practice and approaches are consistently evident in Scotland. These include an approach to refugee integration that involves the integration of asylum seekers from the moment of arrival, and calls for the ending of detention of child asylum seekers. The more positive approach in Scotland to asylum and refugee issues is also appar-

ent in the fact that it has the highest involvement of any UK region in the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme for refugees from the conflict in Syria. On immigration, a desire for differentiation is also discernible and this has become more strident since the Brexit vote in 2016. Early differentiation on immigration can be seen in introduction of the Fresh Talent scheme in 2004 that allowed students at Scottish further education institutes to extend their stay on post-study work visas. Since the Brexit vote, several First Minister speeches and statements from the Scottish Government have stressed the desire for Scotland to be a country that welcomes immigrants.

It is difficult to determine the factors driving a different and more positive approach to immigration in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK. While attitudes to immigrants and immigration in Scotland are more favourable than elsewhere in the UK, they are not in favour of immigration overall. Scholars have advanced a number of theories for the broadly positive approach to immigration in Scottish politics and policy debates. Factors seen as contributing to this include: a desire to display an open, civic Scottish identity to demonstrate that Scottish nationalism is civic and inclusive, rather than ethnic and exclusionary; lower levels of immigration, greater concerns regarding population growth and population ageing; limited powers over immigration resulting in a lack of party competition or polarisation on the issue and othering of the English.<sup>3</sup>

A central concern for successive administrations in Scotland that is provided as a rationale for its more open approach to immigration has been more advanced population decline and population ageing. Scotland experienced a declining population until the 2000s. The shrinking population and the prospect of it falling below the 5 million mark were identified as a key challenge by successive administrations going back to the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2004. Population ageing is also more advanced in Scotland than in the rest of the UK and migration plays a greater role in sustaining the population growth in

Scotland than in England and Northern Ireland. In addition, migration, particularly from the EU, has played a key role in sustaining more remote communities, with many rural businesses in sectors like hospitality and tourism, food and drink, and agriculture and food processing unviable without workers from the EU.<sup>4</sup>

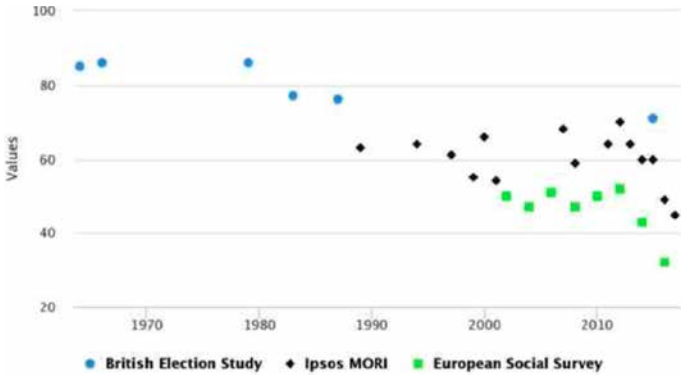
Scotland provides an interesting contrast in terms offering generally positive narrative on immigration despite public attitudes that are not, in fact, that much different to those across the UK as a whole. To understand this in context is it worth briefly outlining the general political differences between Scotland and England. In recent decades Scotland has exhibited more left-leaning political attitudes and voting patterns than England. These have their roots in the nation's experience of manufacturing decline in the late 1970s and 1980s resulting in unpopularity of the Conservative Party in Scotland due to its association with government in the 1980s. It also relates to a wider reliance on the state and public sector in Scotland leading to support for social democratic rather than neo-liberal approaches. This left-leaning political instinct tended to favour the Labour Party as the dominant centre-left party until more recently when the Scottish Nationalist Party began to espouse a vision of an independent Scotland (its primary aim) as more egalitarian, outward-looking and left-wing.

### **Attitudinal data on immigration**

The analysis of attitudinal data in this section mainly uses the UK as the unit of analysis, as data is generally available at UK level with little Scotland level data available. Attitudes to immigration across the UK are generally negative, with the majority of respondents in a variety of surveys consistently favouring a reduction in immigration. While comparing surveys and understanding responses is fraught with difficulty for a number of reasons, it is clear that immigration is unpopular with the general public. The graph below shows opposition to immigrants/immigration with data taken from three main surveys going back to 1964.



**Figure 2:** Opposition to immigrants/immigration 1964-2016<sup>5</sup>



Source: S. Blinder, *Immigration and independence: Public Opinion on immigration in Scotland in the context of the referendum Debate*, Migration Observatory report, COMPAS, University of Oxford, 2014.

While the salience of immigration as an issue of concern rises as immigration levels rise, the sense that immigration is too high persists even when levels of immigration are low. This suggests that lowering immigration is not likely to reduce the perception that there are too many immigrants or that the level of immigration is too high.<sup>6</sup> Attitudinal segmentation shows that the largest group of people hold complex, and sometimes contradictory, views on immigration characterising them as an ‘anxious middle’ as opposed to the minorities holding staunchly pro- or anti- immigration views.<sup>7</sup> A range of concerns can be said to underpin negative attitudes on immigration including concerns about impacts on public finances, public services, labour markets, culture and the economy. Respondents to surveys also have markedly different views on different categories of migrants with asylum seekers frequently viewed as the least popular. Similarly, low skilled migrants tend to be viewed less favourably than the highly skilled, although recent research suggests that responses to low skilled migrants are far more positive when specific ‘useful’ occupations are named, such as ‘fruit pickers’.<sup>8</sup>

Different groups have different foci for their immigration concerns. Higher earners are generally more concerned about the impacts on public services, while lower earners are more concerned about jobs.<sup>9</sup> Disaggregating survey data reveals a range of factors that interact with attitudes to immigration. For example, where people live influences attitudes, with those in diverse or cosmopolitan areas generally more positively disposed. This seems to provide evidence supporting the ‘contact hypothesis’ that interactions between groups tend to lessen levels of antipathy. However, there is a caveat in that asylum dispersal areas in the UK have the highest levels overall of respondents wanting immigration reduced. This indicates there is a core of resource competition that contributes to anti-immigrant sentiment in areas with high levels of deprivation, while elsewhere it is the fear of immigrants and what they represent rather than the reality of immigration that appears to play the central role.

What newspapers people read links closely with their attitudes on immigration, indicating a key role for media portrayal of immigrants in shaping attitudes. However, it is difficult to determine causality and researchers tend to confine themselves to seeing a ‘reinforcing interaction’ between media, the public and politicians on immigration. Age and life stage also seem to influence opinions on immigration with older groups tending to be more negative on immigration. Party politics matter too with those intending to vote for left wing parties such as the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats registering lower rates of salience on immigration. Notably, undecided and non-voters register closer to Labour and Liberal Democrat voters on the question of the importance of immigration as an issue.

### **Eurobarometer data**

The Eurobarometer data<sup>10</sup> at the centre of this analysis may seem unusual in that the UK responses are positive on immigration in many respects, as well as consistently more positive than the EU28

average. However, it should be noted that the survey does not ask respondents whether they like or dislike immigration nor whether it should be increased or reduced. Instead, this is a survey that focuses mainly on integration rather than immigration. Even the questions on the opportunities and impacts of immigration can be seen as relating to the experience of immigration in the past rather than reflecting voters' views on immigration policies themselves. The positive responses should not obscure the fact that people can be positive about the impacts and benefits of immigration, but nevertheless wish to see immigration reduced.<sup>11</sup> How to effectively address this dissonance in peoples' views on immigration will be key for progressives. The difficulty will be to find a message that acknowledges many people's grasp of the benefits of immigration without discounting their misgivings. The Eurobarometer data for countries like the UK<sup>12</sup> highlight the need to wrestle with professedly positive views on immigration alongside a rising penchant for anti-immigration politics. To add a further layer of contradiction, alongside a drift towards increasingly anti-immigration policies and politics at UK level, within Scotland a more leftist voting tradition remains coupled with a generally positive approach to immigration that has become more outspoken in recent years.

The UK dataset in this Eurobarometer special survey contains 1,382 respondents of which 94% are UK nationals. The remaining 6% comprise nationals of Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania (1% each).<sup>13</sup> Of these, 43% believe themselves to be "well informed" on immigration and integration related matters, 55% think they are "not well informed".

The highest proportion of UK respondents view immigration as an opportunity (35%). This is one of the highest proportions across the EU28, with only Sweden and Ireland more optimistic as to immigration offering opportunities (45% and 36% respectively) and the EU average as low as 20%. This viewpoint is the more striking when you consider that only in a handful of countries<sup>14</sup> did a greater proportion of respondents see immigration as an oppor-

tunity rather than as a problem. However, among UK respondents a further 31% see immigration as a problem and 22% see it as equally a problem and an opportunity. Further breakdowns of the survey show that those who see immigration as an opportunity are mostly left leaning (53%) while those seeing it as a problem tend to identify as right on the political scale (43%).

High levels of UK respondents (74%) report being comfortable interacting with immigrants across the full range of social categories,<sup>15</sup> compared to an EU28 average of 57%. The average conceals that in most EU countries the majority did not feel comfortable across all types of interactions. This was only the case in 11 other countries but the average is pulled up by the fact that in some of those countries reported comfort rates stood at very high levels such as 83% in Spain, 79% in the Netherlands, 78% in Portugal and 81% reported for Sweden.

In the UK the level of reported comfort interacting with immigrants varied by left-right political identification. Those identifying as left or centre reported higher rates of comfort (84% and 74%), while those on the right reported lower rates (67%). The data strongly support the contact hypothesis, with those with more interaction with immigrants reporting higher rates of comfort interacting with immigrants (above 80%) than those with less frequent contact – of those who interacted with migrants less than weekly, only 59% reported feeling comfortable interacting across all settings. Far fewer variations are discernible in terms of urban/rural divides, with rates of reported comfort varying only slightly (from 73% to 76%) between rural areas/villages, mid-size towns and large towns. Similarly, social class sees high rates of reported comfort across the board from 72% to 83%. However, difficulty paying bills does correlate to lower rates of comfort, with those with difficulties paying bills “most of the time” reporting just a 59% rate of comfort. Those with no, or only occasional, difficulties paying bills reported comfort levels of 73% and 72%.

In terms of economic impacts, people in the UK had more positive views on the economic benefits of immigration, with 69% in agreement – compared to an EU28 average of 51%. This was one of the highest positive responses alongside Sweden (69%) and Ireland (72%). Only a further six countries had a majority of positive responses. Economic benefits for UK respondents were most related to migrants providing labour in hard-to-fill jobs: 81% saw this as a benefit from immigration, while 65% agreed that immigrants brought new ideas and boosted innovation. Less than half of respondents agreed that immigration was a burden on the welfare state (38%) or that immigrants took jobs away from other workers (33%). As might be expected, views on economic benefits of migration vary in relation to the education level and economic situation of the respondents. Of those ending education at 15 or younger just 57% are persuaded of the economic benefit, compared to 81% of those ending their education at 20 years+. Those with difficulty paying bills are less likely to perceive immigration as bringing economic benefits than those who never have such worries (50% and 71% respectively). Left-right political identification matters too. A high proportion of those identifying as on the left see immigration as having economic benefits (84%). The same is the case for 68% of those identifying as the centre and just 61% of those identifying as on the right.

Social impacts were viewed even more positively than economic benefits, with 71% of UK respondents agreeing that the impact of immigrants on society was “very positive” or “moderately positive”. The enrichment of cultural life seems to feature even more strongly, with 75% agreeing that immigrants had enriched cultural life (art, music, food, etc.) In terms of the impact of immigration on crime rates, respondents were more circumspect, with 50% agreeing that overall immigration had worsened crime problems in the UK. In terms of integration, discrimination against migrants was seen as a major obstacle by 65%. Furthermore, 62% saw negative media portrayal as a major obstacle to integration, 60% saw the major obstacle as limited efforts by migrants themselves to

integrate, 54% identified limited interactions between migrants and citizens, 51% saw difficulties finding a job as a major obstacle to integration. Positive views of the social impacts of immigration were quite widespread across EU countries, with a further 15 countries reporting this as a majority view, including a number of the 2004 accession countries including Poland, Slovenia and Lithuania. For the UK respondents, the factors that seem to influence responses most are very similar to those that seem to influence views on the economic impacts. Again, lower educational outcomes increase the proportion of negative views to 16% from just 2% among graduates. Financial worries increase negative views to 19% from 7%. Those identifying as on the left report just 4% negative views on social impacts. Those on the right report higher rates of 15%, while among those who see themselves in the centre 7% see social impacts as negative.

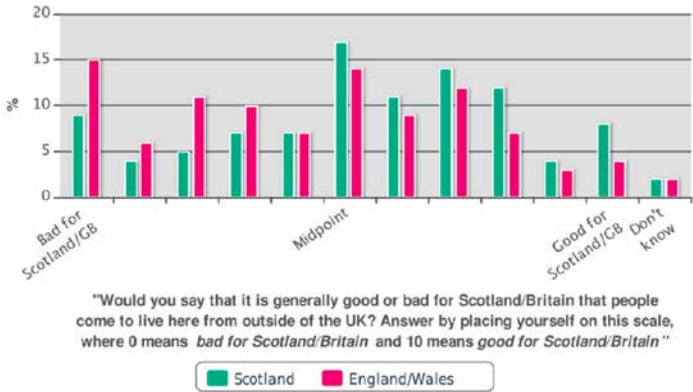
### **UK-Scotland differences and similarities in attitudes**

As noted above, the political debate on immigration between the UK and Scotland is markedly different, with party positions and political debate in Scotland more positive than at UK level. This difference in positioning extends across the political spectrum and is visible in parties that have a UK presence and a Scottish version such as the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties.<sup>16</sup> Attitudes to immigration in Scotland are also more positive than in England and Wales. Nevertheless, a majority of people in Scotland would prefer to see immigration reduced. Comparing attitudes between Scotland and the rest of the UK is made difficult by a lack of comparable data. While the British Social Attitudes survey and the Scottish Social Attitudes survey both periodically include questions relating to immigration and race relations, the questions are differently worded and posed in different years making comparisons unreliable. With the British Social Attitudes survey gathering just over 3,000 responses across the UK as a whole, disaggregating by region means sample sizes become small.

The most robust, in-depth, analysis comparing attitudes is a report based on a commissioned YouGov survey gathering over 2,000 responses in Scotland and in England plus Wales over the period 16-28 October 2013.<sup>17</sup> This found that 58% of respondents in Scotland wanted to see immigration reduced, compared to 75% in England and Wales. While this is 17 percentage points lower, it is still a majority view in favour of reducing immigration. However, in addition, a smaller proportion of respondents in Scotland than in England and Wales (32% compared to 49%, see graph 3 below) saw people coming to live in the country from outside the UK as “bad for the country”. This presents a contradiction that marks a key challenge for progressives, namely that people may well understand the benefits of immigration while being hostile to immigration. As the authors of this study note, a “belief in the benefits of immigration can coexist with a desire to reduce its scale”. They caution that the different terminology used in the questions could also explain the variation.

The report also notes that the difference in attitudes to immigration between Scotland and England and Wales may reflect the difference in immigration contexts, where Scotland’s migrant population is relatively small and its population density low compared to many parts of the UK. While attitudes to immigration are more positive than in England and Wales, the perception that immigration is good for Scotland still falls just shy of a majority at 49%.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 3:** Immigration as good/bad for Scotland/Britain



Source: Migration Observatory/YouGov, 16-27 October 2013.

Generally, scholars are sceptical of finding an innate difference in attitudes to immigration in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK even though the attitudinal data tend to be more positive for Scotland. McCollum et al, for example, disaggregate 2011 BSA data by government office region to find that only inner and outer London have fewer negative responses questions on the level of immigration and a desire to see immigration halted.<sup>19</sup> A similar finding is made by Mann and Tommis based on polling data from Ipsos MORI.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, the differences are treated cautiously, with suspicion that context and a lack of power over immigration and asylum issues in the Scottish Government and Parliament may tend to restrict the extent to which concerns surface in attitudinal data from Scotland.

### Status quo

The current political narrative in Scotland is characterised by the continuing dominance of the Scottish National Party (SNP), which formed a minority government in the Scottish Parliament for the first time in 2007 and has been the party of government in



Scotland ever since. Commentators on Scottish nationalism, and particularly the brand of nationalism espoused by the SNP, note its keenness to stress a brand of inclusive, outward looking civic nationalism in contrast to exclusionary tropes of ethnic nationalism. The SNP's dominance appears to have reached its peak in the 2015 UK general election, where almost all of the Scottish seats in Westminster went to the SNP. However, a further, and perhaps paradoxical, development has been the resurgence of the Conservative Party in Scotland. Despite Scotland being characterised as a left-voting country, both the UK Parliament elections in 2017 and the Scottish Parliament elections in 2015 have resulted in the Conservative Party securing the second largest share of seats. The SNP's dominance has come mainly at the expense of other left-leaning parties, particularly the Labour Party. The 2017 Westminster election result was striking in that the SNP's almost complete dominance in terms of Scottish seats at Westminster (56 of 59) swung back to 35 seats with 12 of those lost going to the Conservative Party, marking that party's best performance in Scotland since 1983. In terms of the European Parliament, Scotland constitutes a single constituency and returns six MEPs. The past three elections have returned two members each from the SNP and Labour Parties. The party-affiliation of the remaining MEPs elected shows a drift rightwards, with the Conservative Party MEP joined by an MEP from UKIP in 2014 rather than representation from the Liberal Democrats.

Despite the SNP's current dominance, core political issues provide a substantial challenge for the party's positioning. One core issue is Brexit. While Scottish voters wished to remain in the EU by 62%, SNP support for remaining in the EU (by remaining within the European single market and retaining free movement of people/continuing EEA immigration)<sup>21</sup> did not translate into straightforward success at the ballot box in 2017. Instead, it appears that the SNP's commitment to a second referendum on keeping Scotland in the EU has the effect of splitting the pro-independence vote. Eurosceptic support for the SNP dropped from 51% to 36% between the 2015

and the 2017 elections.<sup>22</sup> Currently the only other party offering a remain alternative would be the Liberal Democrats, whose political fortunes in Scotland have hit a serious low.

The question of how immigration plays into the current political scene is a vexed one. Immigration is often taken to be a key issue driving the vote to leave the EU, with the notion of ‘taking back control’ interpreted as concomitant with public concerns about levels of immigration and objections to the free movement of people. Much is made of the central role that concerns about immigration played in the leave campaign.<sup>23</sup> While some analyses of the impacts of immigration on the 2016 Brexit vote find the impact to be small and related to perceived, rather than experienced, effects,<sup>24</sup> others determine that negative attitudes to immigration were strongly predictive of voting to leave the EU.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of the impact of anti-immigrant sentiment on the Brexit vote, attitudes to immigration in the UK have been softening since the vote. Blinder and Richards cite several surveys that show lessening support for a reduction in immigration. These reductions are by sizeable margins such as a decline from 77% to 58% of respondents wanting immigration reduced and a decline from 64% to 45% in those believing there were too many migrants.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of policy and political pronouncements it is striking that the Scottish Government’s approach to immigration in the period since the Brexit vote has been characterised by positive statements on the benefits of immigration and the need for immigrants to continue to come to Scotland. Positive messages in speeches by the First Minister<sup>27</sup> are backed up with positive proposals on immigration in Scottish Government submissions<sup>28</sup> and discussion papers<sup>29</sup> on immigration seeking to influence debate and policy processes, as well as campaigns to welcome and integrate ‘new Scots’ and proposals to attract migrants through tax breaks<sup>30</sup>. The positive approach to immigration goes wider than the current government and is echoed in statements made by the other parties in Scotland. Looking back to the 2017 general election, the main par-

ty pledges on immigration in Scotland are more frequently linked to improving the ways in which Scotland can secure the economic benefits of migration compared to national party manifestos.<sup>31</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Migration is a necessary investment for the future in Scotland. Demographic projections show immigration as the core factor in sustaining population growth. Migration also plays a key role in the labour market and brings in much needed innovation and skills. In rural and remote areas of Scotland it can play a crucial role in keeping localities viable and sustaining business. But as well as opportunities it presents challenges, and attitudes to immigration are consistently negative, even when the impacts of migration are viewed positively. It is important to approach data relating to immigration carefully and not reduce it to being either positive or negative given that people's views are complex and often seemingly contradictory. It is important to note that even where immigration impacts are seen to be beneficial (as in the Eurobarometer survey data discussed above) this should not necessarily be read as supporting pro-immigration policies that would seek to increase immigration flows. Instead, politicians should be aware of the propensity for immigration as an issue to function as a touchstone for discontents that may be unrelated. The role for progressives here is to ensure that immigrants do not become scapegoats for policies related to austerity, rising inequality, declining security and living standards. Thus there is a need to be actively explaining the causes of social and economic ills, rather than solely espousing the benefits of immigration. The key is to recognise people's discontent and dissatisfaction, but to help frame this through a progressive rather than a populist lens.

The experience in Scotland indicates that leadership on immigration matters: the consistently positive messages in Scotland on immigration across the political spectrum seem to have yielded attitudes that are generally more positive than elsewhere in the

UK. It also appears to have led to a situation where the public are more aware that immigration is beneficial even when it may be unpopular. It is the task of politicians to provide leadership on this divisive issue that acknowledges people's fears while protecting our countries' best interests.

*How can progressives balance citizens' concerns with a principled approach to immigration in their policies?*

Progressives should be unafraid to stress the positive impacts and opportunities immigration offers and to explain the continuing need for immigration that exists in our countries both economically and socially. Progressives should be reassured that when communicating with voters the aim is not to get people to like immigration, but simply to understand the need for immigration and the benefits it can bring.

Progressives should take care to acknowledge the difficulties and challenges citizens express as relating to immigration. However, they should be proactive in showing citizens that the roots of these problems have causes unrelated to immigration and be able to show how progressives intend to address citizens' problems and why that will be effective.

Voters' perceptions of the scale of immigration do not correspond to actual levels of immigration. Research indicates that 'myth-busting' approaches that seek to correct voters' perceptions of the scale of immigration tend to be ineffective in changing minds on the perception that immigration is at too high a level. Progressives should therefore not simply focus on correcting impressions that immigration is 'too much' with a data driven account of actual immigration levels.

Progressive parties should collectively stress the benefits of immigration and highlight the positives while acknowledging that there can be challenges. But they should take care not to legitimate

far-right anti-immigration views as this would risk simply legitimating far-right and anti-immigrant parties rather than attracting right-leaning voters.

*How should progressives communicate internally within the party and the party family as well as externally with voters?*

Internal communication on immigration needs to stress the need to demonstrate leadership and values in our approach to immigration.

Internal communication should stress that left-leaning voters are more likely to hold less negative views on immigration, while right-leaning voters hold more negative views. Anti-immigration rhetoric therefore risks putting off left-leaning supporters while simply legitimating anti-immigration parties for right-leaning voters.

Communication with voters should seek to discuss immigration in local, concrete terms wherever possible. Research suggests that attitudes to local migrants or immigration into specified jobs are less negative than when immigration is discussed in general abstract terms. Progressives should pledge to tackle public policy problems that are attributed to immigration, such as lack of available housing and pressure on services, but make clear the causes of such problems do not lie mainly with immigration or immigrants.

Communication with voters should seek to engage particularly with undecided voters and voters in those social-demographic groups most inclined to be positive towards immigration. Younger voters in particular are a key group that progressives should focus on.

Progressives should keep in mind that voters' perceptions and fears that immigration is too high are not alleviated by reducing immigration levels. Promises to reduce immigration to a level that voters believe is correct should therefore be avoided as this tends simply to reinforce that immigration is problematic.

## *How should progressives engage with opponents of immigration?*

Progressives must be assured in their understanding that they cannot win against parties on the right of the political spectrum by being more hostile to immigration. Progressives cannot gain politically by tacking rightwards on this issue and need to remain true to their values.

Moving to more negative immigration policies and rhetoric does not ultimately help progressives secure the centre ground. Instead it shifts the centre ground further to the right and this legitimates anti-immigration arguments and anti-immigration parties.

Left-wing parties are less likely to convince voters when they intend to enforce restrictive immigration policies. Adopting such policies as a progressive party would not therefore secure the same gains at the ballot box as it might for parties on the right.

Progressives should be reassured that the largest segment of voters makes up an undecided 'anxious middle' on immigration. Progressives should focus on persuading this undecided group rather than those who have set anti-immigration views. Most people within this undecided group are already inclined to vote Labour or Liberal Democrat in the UK.

## Notes

- 1 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/6961675/David-Cameron-net-immigration-will-be-capped-at-tens-of-thousands.html>.
- 2 <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-population-needs-migration-policy/>.
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- 5 Notes: British Election Studies 1964, 1966, 1979, 2015 (Do you think that too many immigrants have been let into this country or not? Yes/No), 1983, 1987 (Do you think that immigration has gone too far? Yes/No); 1989-2017 data are from Ipsos-MORI (How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "There are too many immigrants in Britain", 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). Also, Ipsos MORI allowed a 'neither' response in some years but not others. Thus, Ipsos MORI's versions allowed more respondents to opt out of the question, depressing opposition to immigration but also depressing assent to immigration; European Social Survey 2002-2016 (Allow immigrants of a different race/ethnicity to come and live in the UK, response categories 'none' and 'a few' combined).
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- 10 Special Eurobarometer survey 469 'Integration of Immigrants in the EU', published 18 April 2018.
- 11 S. Blinder, *Immigration and independence: Public Opinion on immigration in Scotland in the context of the referendum Debate*, Migration Observatory report, COMPAS, Oxford 2014, discussed in more detail below.
- 12 Similar countries in this dataset include Sweden and Germany, while Italy, Austria and Hungary frequently present very different views.
- 13 Nationals of Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia are also among the respondents at less than 1% of respondents in each case.
- 14 The other countries are Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Finland and Sweden.

- 15 Categories in the survey are: in the workplace; at a childcare centre, school or university; when using public services; in your neighbourhood; during sport, volunteering or cultural activities; when using household services.
- 16 E. Hepburn, M. Rosie, *Immigration, nationalism, and politics in Scotland*.
- 17 S. Blinder, *Immigration and independence*.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 D. McCollum et al, *Public Attitudes towards immigration in Scotland*.
- 20 R. Mann, Y. Tommis, *Public sentiments towards Immigration in Wales*, Bangor, 2012.
- 21 <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/9234/downloads>.
- 22 <http://blog.whatscotlandthinks.org/2018/06/how-brexit-became-a-problem-for-nicola-sturgeon/>.
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# Recommendations

This section is a summary of the recommendations emerging from the previous chapters and aims to provide strategic and practical advice for progressive politicians in the run-up to the European Parliament elections in May 2019.

Our recommendations have three core themes concerning both regular as well as irregular migration, and a fourth section with practical advice:

1. **Establishing a moderate narrative** explaining that progressives are the only ones who offer a balanced approach to migration.
2. **Mainstreaming migration** into other policy areas as much as possible rather than addressing it as an exclusive topic.
3. **Exploiting the mistakes and failures** of populists and far-right parties.
4. **Practical advice**

## 1. Establishing a moderate narrative

Progressives should present themselves as the only ones who offer a balanced approach to migration based on human rights and solidarity but which also strives to ensure that migration is controlled and which addresses the core concerns and fears that voters link to migration. This narrative should also proclaim a truly inclusive vision of society in which disadvantaged groups are not played off against each other but rather unite against common structural challenges. Progressives should provide a moderate alternative to both right-wing and far-left approaches to migration. This strategy maintains our traditional claim of being a broad coalition of diverse voter segments and conflicting interests. It is also the only viable short-term way to

prevent internal ideological divisions on cultural issues and diversity from tearing our parties apart. In the long term, however, the main goal should be the redirection of public opinion towards a forward-not backward-oriented perception of diversity in a globalised world. A progressive strategy should contain the following aspects:

- The starting point for progressive migration narratives (and policies) should be that migration is a part of the human condition. It has always been a part of human history, and people will continue to move across countries and continents in the future. Migration cannot be stopped, but it can be managed. Migration is neither good nor bad, it is rather a phenomenon that simply exists.
- Progressives should focus on getting voters to understand that immigration is a necessary part of our future if we want to remain prosperous and thriving. Rather than trying to persuade voters to like it, we should explain how immigration can benefit our countries economically and demographically.
- We need a long-term progressive vision: a progressive strategy must be based on a long-term vision of Europe as a welcoming continent, which is open to legal, orderly and safe migration.
- Progressives are at a disadvantage when immigration rises in salience, and should thus avoid playing up the issue. Nevertheless, progressives should demonstrate a clear commitment to domestic/EU migration management and addressing root causes through proactive foreign policy and development cooperation. Creating legal migration channels could be the strongest political message.
- We need to Europeanise progressive objectives: in order to achieve our goals, we must push for EU-level solutions and explain why they are necessary. The Common European Asylum System is a case in point: reforming it is the only way to avoid a repeat of the so-called 2015-2016 refugee crisis.

## 2. Mainstreaming migration

Immigration functions as a touchstone issue in European politics, channelling voter concerns and discontent on issues ranging from economic insecurity to cultural change. Progressives should try to shift the focus of political debate towards these underlying concerns, as this is where they can be better positioned to take on the right. By mainstreaming migration issues into broader socio-economic challenges, we can avoid ‘us vs. them’ framing and demonstrate how structural deficiencies – not migrants – are the problem. We must ensure that we have strong narratives and convincing proposals for voters on how we will tackle growing inequality and rising job insecurity, and on how we will provide safety and security. We must promote an attractive vision for our future that includes immigration.

- Progressives should ensure that party positions have a strong narrative on solutions to social and economic concerns that aligns with our values. We should strive to ensure that immigration is not to the detriment of existing residents. Progressives should focus on safeguarding labour standards, wage levels, public services and social security.
- The left should offer a policy that can reduce uncertainties, acknowledge that immigration can raise challenges, but be clear that these are just part of the wider challenges facing our societies. Progressives must stress that the solutions needed to counter growing insecurity and inequality must be much broader than ending or restricting immigration, and emphasise that without immigration some of these problems will worsen.
- Progressives should address security concerns relating to immigration (regardless of whether these concerns are only perceived or actually exist). But progressives should also explain that restrictive measures marginalise migrants and their descendants, thus increasing the risk of crime and radicalisation. Instead, solutions lie in improving integration and equality.

- Progressives should explain that part of the challenge for our societies is to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs and that these are shared by all.
- Progressives should be careful to resolve any instances of direct resource competition between immigrant and non-immigrant populations with regard to jobs, housing and other resources.

### **3. Exploiting mistakes and failures**

Even though progressives should mainly aim for a narrative that is centred around their own ideas, there is a window of opportunity to show that populist policies fail to provide sustainable migration solutions.

- The promises of Brexit with its slogan “take back control” could be used as a case to highlight the failure of populist ‘quick fixes’ based on misinformation. It is up to progressives and the political centre to prevent further chaos.
- Likewise, the false success of the June 2018 European Council summit, which promised disembarkation platforms and a strong focus on border control, could be used to showcase that only progressive solutions for a Common European Asylum System provide sustainable answers.
- Local-level examples of counterproductive migration policies could be highlighted at the national level in order to demonstrate how hard-line policies do not work.

### **4. Practical advice**

The following points are a collection of practical tips for progressive campaigning and advocacy work. It is not an exhaustive list but rather a starting point for further elaboration.

- Use simple, clear and natural language.
- Communication with voters should seek to discuss immigration in local, concrete terms wherever possible. For example, while using the term “unskilled workers” can cause implicit disapproval, describing migrants as “cleaning staff in hospitals”, “construction workers” etc. can foster a more positive sentiment.
- Pay attention to vocabulary. Always distinguish between refugees and migrants; publishing a progressive vocabulary list could help.
- Personal leadership on immigration is important – do not underestimate the role of personality/charisma.
- Target group: focus more on young voters and non-voters, since formerly progressive voters who have recently voted for the right are much more difficult to reach.
- Draw historic parallels between current political developments and 20<sup>th</sup> century history, and how the EU was created and expanded in response to those historical events.
- There are few votes to be gained for left-wing parties by shifting to anti-immigration positions. Do not talk tough on immigration issues to attract right-leaning voters; they will not be persuaded, while left-leaning voters will be alienated.



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An increasing number of Europeans feel uneasy about people who escape poverty and violence in search of a decent and safe life far away from their home. This European uneasiness is expressed in fears that range from unfair competition in the labour market and reduced access to social services in the host countries to the perceived threat posed by migrants to national identities, ethnic homogeneity and security. The aim of this book is to try and shed light on the paradox that the disadvantaged and marginalised represent an imminent threat to our societies. It also aims to explain the origin of a political short circuit that is affecting public opinion right across Europe and impacting on electoral results, political dynamics and immigration policies in many EU member states.

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