Chapter 8

Policies and “Outcomes” for Third Country Nationals in Europe’s Labour Markets

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A. Introduction

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) focuses on indicators of policy integration, but in this chapter we give some consideration to what happens “on the ground” in terms, particularly of the labour market position of the EU’s third country national (TCN) population. This focus on the labour market situation could be seen as indicative of a relationship between the policies mapped by MIPEX and “outcomes,” such as employment and unemployment levels. We argue that such reasoning would be too simplistic. The relationship between policy and outcomes does actually disguise a complex set of relationships that centre on the making of policy and the multiple factors that intervene in the relationship between immigrant integration policy frameworks across the EU and outcomes that may or may not be a consequence of these policies.

We begin by exploring the relationship between immigrant integration policies and the contextual data that we present in this chapter. We then move on to explore the main strands of thinking within the academic literature on the diffusion and impact of international standards and norms on domestic political systems. We pay particular attention to the concept of “Europeanisation” and explore the various ways in which the EU can “hit home” in domestic politics. We then proceed to provide extensive data on the labour market position of Europe’s TCN population. We see that some of the countries that perform well in terms of policy frameworks and adaptation to EU law and standards actually perform less well when we explore the labour market position of TCNs.

As a background to the data that we present, it should be noted that data concerning the labour market situation of TCNs can be difficult to gather because of data gaps and a continued inability/reluctance by some states to collect this data. For example, data on the labour market situation of TCNs in Italy is only
available at regional level, which makes it difficult to assess the national picture. The European Commission is aware of the need for more specific and reliable information to support EU policies. An EU Regulation has been proposed to tackle difficulties arising from incoherent methods of data collection in the member states and obliging them to collect comparable data also on the labour market status of TCNs (European Commission, 2005).

Different states can have different methods of collecting data, but more than this, they can have different understandings of what type of data should be collected. So, for example, in France there is an engrained hostility to the collection of data that refers to the ethnic origin of migrants. This contrasts markedly with the situation in countries such as the United Kingdom and Netherlands where such data are collected systematically. There is also significant temporal variation here because nationality laws differ across the EU, so it is possible that TCNs can include new migrants and long-term settled 2nd or 3rd generation while the TCN population does not include “ethnic minorities” whose origins lie in immigration, but that have become citizens. The strength of the MIPEX project is its scope and ambition. The data gaps are not the fault of the project. Rather they can be viewed as a result of a “politics of statistics” on immigrant populations and are therefore issues that need to be considered if we are to develop a fully understanding of the effects of EU action.

B. Policy and Outcomes

While we assume that immigrant integration policy makes a difference to the lives of Europe’s migrant populations, we are also aware that there are a wide range of other factors linked, for example, to the more general organisational characteristics of labour markets and welfare systems that are not ostensibly linked to immigrant integration and that make a difference too.

This leads us to consider the relationship between policy and outcomes. It may be that immigrant integration policies lead to certain kinds of outcomes – whether positive or negative – for migrant populations. They may, for instance, facilitate labour market access, they may combat discrimination or they may provide new resources for mobilisation by pro-migrant groups. It may also be the case that so-called outcomes also generate certain types of policy. To illustrate this point, the current strong emphasis on socio-economic integration and linguistic adaptation by immigrant newcomers can be understood as a response to a perception that previous “multicultural” policies have “failed” (Brubaker, 2001).

This then raises the issue of whether policies “succeed” or “fail” and how we would assess success or failure (Castles, 2003). On this point about “policy failure” our analysis also needs to be nuanced, because it is too crude to talk about policy success or failure as though these can be identified in such simple,