



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



**SEARCH**  
SHARING KNOWLEDGE ASSETS:  
INTERREGIONALLY COHESIVE  
NEIGHBORHOODS

## Sharing Knowledge Assets: InterRegionally Cohesive Neighborhoods (SEARCH) Project

Ongoing project (01/08/2011- 31/07/2014)

### ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL FORMATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE CHALLENGE OF A BETTER INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE EU LABOUR MARKET AND THE EU SOCIETY

After the fifth enlargement round of the European Union in 2004 its external borders shifted drastically. Suddenly a range of poorer, economically and politically less stable and less democratic countries bordered the EU. In response to these changing circumstances the need was felt to create a unified policy to deal with neighbouring countries. This unified policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), subsumed the patchwork of existing policy instruments. Its goal is to create a ring of countries around the EU with which the EU has close, peaceful and co-operative relations (COM 373 final, 2004).

The SEARCH project aims at strengthening the integration process between the EU and the NCs by focusing on the European Research Neighbourhood (ERN), thereby improving fundamentally the understanding of institutional framework conditions of the ENP countries, their economic interactions with the EU in terms of people, capital, trade, knowledge, and innovation, in order to improve future definition and implementation of European Neighbouring Policies taking into account that "one size fits all" policy recommendations will not be appropriate due to the bilateral nature of the EU-ENP countries agreements.

Within the SEARCH project the WP3 is aimed at analyse the actual and potential future role of labour migration and its economic and social consequences (costs and benefits) both for destination (EU regions) and origin regions (neighbouring ones). Particular attention is given to the role of particular intangible assets, such as human capital, entrepreneurship and technology diffusion, but also public attitudes towards migration and social

capital creation.

This policy brief focuses on the determinants of attitudes towards migration and the interactions between immigrants and social capital creation. In particular, we first point out the policy issue we address and describe the context of the analysis and, second, and based on the empirical evidence provided by the research carried out within task 3.5 of the SEARCH project, we provide some policy recommendations on how to improve immigrants' situation in their host countries.

## EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

### **PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS ARE RELEVANT FOR POLICY-MAKING**

Public attitudes towards immigration are very important as policy makers usually rely on citizens' perceptions for shaping migration policies. The theories that explain the determinants of attitudes towards immigration are diverse and interdisciplinary. Generally, the theories can be divided into two groups – individual and collective theories. Individual theories of attitudes towards immigrants place emphasis on individual drivers, such as the level of education (human capital theory), personal income, employment status (individual economic theories), cultural conflicts where there is a lack of understanding from natives towards immigrants (cultural marginality safety approach). Collective theories focus on aggregated variables, such as the number of immigrants in a country (contact theory), level of unemployment and unemployment growth rate (collective economic theories).

### **THE DETERMINANTS OF THESE ATTITUDES ARE DIVERSE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY ...**

Empirical research has shown indeed that many factors influence public attitudes towards immigration: demographic (e.g. age, sex, race), economic (e.g. income), social and cultural (e.g. religion, media, information sources, actual and perceived social norms, ethnicity, lifestyle), psychological (e.g. personality type), political (e.g. left-wing/right-wing ideologies) and geographical (e.g. location, proximity to immigrants).

### **.. AND THERE IS A WIDE HETEROGENEITY AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL**

A relevant result in this context is that there is a wide heterogeneity in public attitudes towards migration at the country level. For instance, Demidova and Paas (2013) confirm that determinants of people's attitudes towards immigrants are differing between Estonia and Russia, as it happens among “old” and “new” European Union countries.

### **IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

However, although surveys provide a reliable description of variation in attitudes towards migration among different groups of citizens and along time, they only provide a limited understanding of the factors and changes that underlie these differences in attitude. The fact that some characteristics are associated (correlated) with particular attitudes does not necessarily mean that they are the causal factor. For this reason, and in order to improve the knowledge about public attitudes formation, researchers have also started to analyse the relationship between migration and social capital. Social capital works through encouraging cooperation among economic entities and thus lowers transaction costs of business activities, but it also helps to increase social cohesion in the society as a whole. In its broadest sense, it refers to the internal social and cultural coherence of society, the

## EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGE

trust, norms and values that govern interactions among people and the networks and institutions in which they are embedded. As an attribute of a society, social capital can be understood as a specific characteristic of social environment that facilitates people's cooperation. The key idea of this argument is that communities can provide more effective and less costly solutions to various principal-agent and collective goods problems than can markets or government interventions. Also, social capital helps to reduce transaction costs related to uncertainty and lack of information. As such, it can be said that social capital gives "soft", non-economic solutions to economic problems. As shown by Parts (2013), the relationship between migration and social capital is complex and it is not well understood yet. In particular, it could be assumed that migration flows increase the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity thus leading to larger social distance and lower levels of social capital in host countries, but, on the other hand, the human capital of immigrants should act in the opposite direction, thus making it important to attract, first of all, well-educated and high-skilled immigrant labour. For this reason, it is important to achieve a better integration of immigrants in society through a higher "social proximity" of citizens to them.

There is also a growing literature that argues that, together with education levels, one of the factors that appear to be crucial in creating social capital at the community level is ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity. Social distance is a very broad concept and it refers to the cognitive relationship of two cultures that come into contact within an individual, and it is influenced by many factors including immigrants' length of residence. Moreover, according to linguistic scholars, social distance is one of the sociocultural factors affecting the second language acquisition by immigrants and the latter is crucial for their integration in the host country. In this case, learning conditions may also affect learning processes: with bad learning condition, the second language learner (immigrants) thinks that their language is more dominant than the target language group (natives), they will feel that there is no or less need to learn the target language.

The analysis of learning outcomes by first and second generation immigrant children in Italy show that interventions at younger ages are likely to be more effective. In particular, the results obtained by Di Liberto (2013) suggest that the estimated gap between first and second generation students takes more time to close for upper secondary school students than for lower grades pupils. So, if foreign children late arrival is the result of national migration policies on family reunification, these results would imply that the possible benefit of delaying immigrant family reunification need to be compared against the costs of students' remedial assistance.

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## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE NEED TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

A better integration of immigrants in society requires, as a pre-condition, that public opinion is not against them. Although a high presence of immigrants could increase the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of a society leading to larger social distance, it could also contribute to social capital creation if the society is able to create an environment that facilitates people's cooperation. The most effective tool to achieve this goal seems to be proper communication strategies.

### MOBILISING STAKEHOLDERS

Mobilising non-governmental stakeholders – whether in the business sector, trade unions, NGOs or among migrants themselves – is key to improve the effectiveness of campaigns towards a better integration of immigrants. Mobilising the stakeholders is central to building the trust which is a precondition for successful intervention. But in addition, in a context of fiscal austerity, mobilising non-governmental actors can be a necessary and cost-effective alternative to state-heavy action. One way of doing this will be through community networks between different stakeholder groups from migrant organisations to privately owned businesses, and supported the development of organisations directly. These networks and groups could then develop create a platform for migrant voices to be also involved in the process.

### ANALYSING THE REAL IMPACT OF CAMPAIGNS

In fact, campaign messages must be tailored to the needs of the different audiences with which the campaign wishes to engage. For this reason, different types of interventions need to target different parts of the population, which will require different approaches including appropriate tools, messages and channels, as well as different styles of communication. The problem of how to define proper communication strategies is exacerbated by the limited quantity and quality of campaign evaluations. The lack of robust evidence about what works in this field leads us to suggest that future research should focus on serious evaluation and impact assessment of communication strategies. Within many evaluations there is a tendency to evaluate effort rather than impact.

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICES

There is a clear need for sharing of knowledge and best practices, both within and across member-states. European authorities could play an important role by making action learning and knowledge exchange possible among national, but also regional and local authorities which are the ones closer to the citizens. The analysis of Italian immigrants' students is a good example of the need of cooperation among different administration levels: if family reunification policies imply a late arrival of foreign children, policy-makers should be aware of the costs in terms of poor educational outcomes and lower social capital creation.

In sum, policies should try to create the preconditions for a better integration of immigrants in order to achieve a more sustainable and higher economic growth in the long run through social capital creation.

## RESEARCH PARAMETERS

### Introductory statement

The current Policy Brief incorporates the policy implications of the research findings on attitudes towards immigrants, its relationship with social capital formation and the specific situation of first and second-generation immigrants within schools.

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### Objectives of the research

The main objective of this research is to identify the main determinants of citizens' attitudes towards immigrants looking at differences between old, new European Union members and neighbouring countries, how these attitudes influence social capital formation and how immigrant children integration in schools is also relevant within this context.

The research summarized in this policy brief focuses on three issues:

- 1) The first objective is to identify determinants of attitudes towards migration in two different countries: Estonia and Russia
  - 2) The second objective is to map basic characteristics of immigrant population as compared to natives, including their endowments of social capital, and to analyse the relationship between social capital components, native values and attitudes towards immigrants in “old” and “new” EU members.
  - 3) The third objective is to focus on education as a determinant of future attitudes towards migration. In fact, one of the factors that appear to be crucial in creating social capital at the community level is ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity. For this reason, it is important to analyse educational outcomes of young immigrants. The analysis focuses on the gap in reading literacy of young immigrant children in Italy and, in particular, on whether the latter is significantly influenced by pupil's age at immigration and length of stay, and country of origin.
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### Methodology

The research relies on the use of microeconomic models applied to individual data coming from the following sources:

- 1) Empirical analysis on attitudes towards migration is based on the European Values Survey (EVS) 4<sup>th</sup> wave data and the European Social Survey (ESS) 5<sup>th</sup> round data.
  - 2) The analysis of educational outcomes of immigrants is analysed using data from the standardized test carried out in Italy by the INVALSI, the Italian institute in charge of evaluating schools' performance. Using a standard education production function setting, the objective is to test whether or not the length of stay in the host country plays a role in the school outcomes of immigrant students in Italy. Data on students' standardized test results on three different levels of schooling are examined and compared, namely, primary (grade 5), lower secondary (grade 6) and upper secondary (grade 10). Descriptive statistics and microeconomic methods are used in order to achieve this objective.
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## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>Project name</b>	Sharing Knowledge Assets: InterRegionally Cohesive Neighborhoods (SEARCH)
<b>Coordinator</b>	<p>University of Barcelona  Faculty of Economics and Business  Department of Econometrics, Statistics and Spanish Economy  AQR-IREA Research Group  Av. Diagonal, 690  08034 Barcelona  Spain  Tel.: 0034 93 403 72 41  Fax: 0034 93 403 72 42  E-Mail: search.project@ub.edu</p> <p>Coordinator: Dr. Jordi Suriñach</p>
<b>Consortium</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Universitat de Barcelona. AQR Research Group – UB-AQR – Barcelona, Spain Team Leader: Jordi Suriñach</li> <li>2. Urban and Regional Research Centre Utrecht – URU – Utrecht, The Netherlands Team Leader: Ron Boschma</li> <li>3. University of Thessaly, South and East European Development Center – UTH – Thessaly, Greece Team Leader: George Petrakos</li> <li>4. Centre for North and South Economic Research University of Cagliari – CRENoS – Cagliari, Italy Team Leader: Raffaele Paci</li> <li>5. London School of Economics and Political Science – LSE – London, United Kingdom Team Leader: Simona Iammarino</li> <li>6. Institute of Regional and Environmental Economy – WU-WIEN–Vienna, Austria Team Leader: Edward Bergman</li> <li>7. Brunel Law School, United Kingdom – UBRUN – London, United Kingdom Team Leader: Maurizio Borghi</li> <li>8. Economic Research Centre of the University of Saint-Etienne – UJM GATE– Saint-Etienne, France Team Leader: Corinne Autant</li> <li>9. Center for research in Economic Policy. University of Pécs – GKK – Pécs, Hungary Team Leader: Attila Varga</li> <li>10. Institute of Economic and Cultural Geography, Leibniz University of Hannover –LUH – Hannover, Germany Team Leader: Javier Revilla</li> </ol>

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Team Leader: Zefi Dimadama
15. European Institute of the Mediterranean – IEMED – Barcelona, Spain  
Josep Ferré
16. Hebrew University of Jerusalem – HUJI –Jerusalem, Israel  
Team Leader: Daniel Felsenstein
17. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey – TUBITAK–  
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Team Leader: Huseyin Guler

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**European Commission**

Directorate-General for Research & Innovation, European Research Area Unit B.5 "Social Sciences & Humanities".

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**Budget**

EU contribution: 2,636,942.00 €

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**Website**

[www.ub.edu/searchproject](http://www.ub.edu/searchproject)

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**Further Reading**

Demidova, O. and Paas, T. (2013), A comparative analysis of people's attitudes towards immigrants in Estonia and Russia, SEARCH Working Paper 3.18.

Parts, E. (2013), Social capital, national values and attitudes towards immigrants: Empirical evidence from the European Union and Neighbouring Countries, SEARCH Working Paper 3.19.

Di Liberto, A. (2013), Length of the stay in the host country and educational achievement of immigrant students: the Italian case, SEARCH Working Paper 3.22.

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