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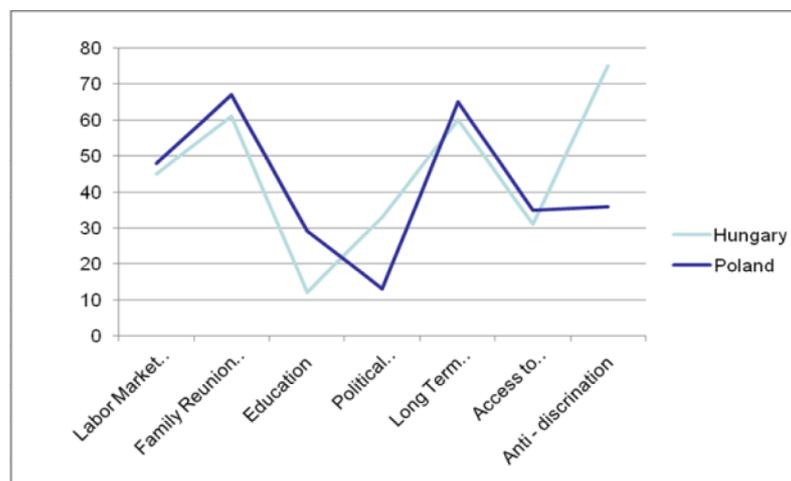
Migrant education: Eastern European policy findings, exemplified by Poland and Hungary

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Hungary and Poland used to be referred as a country of emigration rather than of immigration. Since these countries joined the European Union the situation has changed. In Hungary, most newcomers are ethnic Hungarians from neighboring countries. In Poland immigrants mostly comprise three groups: Vietnamese, Chechens and Ukrainians. The question of adequate integration strategies and policies in these countries is important for developing an open society and training an active citizenship.

Hungary is unfortunately one of the last remaining countries in Europe not to have a comprehensive strategy in this area, according to MIPEX analyses. In 2009 a first strategy for justice and home affairs was adopted, without consultation or follow-up action plans. Polish policies seem to be an integration policy with an ideological approach, because while Poland has a high score in terms of legal protection of migrants according to MIPEX, in the case of political participation indicators or the adaptation of education systems to meet the needs of immigrants there is a low position in the ranking.

Figure2: Policies in the regard of immigration integration in Hungary and Poland.



Education policy in the MIPEX analysis should be related to other policies for education for immigrants to be generally effective in an open society. Education is situated within the social system of a country, and other policies, such as labour market mobility, family reunion, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality or antidiscrimination policies also have an impact on education. The MIPEX indicators show the flexibility of a country's social system on socio-cultural differences, and how these differences are included in the social system of the country.

As the indicators show (Figure 2), Polish policies create various barriers for immigrant integration, and there is a general lack of cohesion. Polish migration policy has an ideological background. The MIPEX study concludes that

Poland lacks an integration strategy for its non-EU residents is reflected in its low MIPEX scores in most areas. High scores on family reunion and long-term residence reflect laws that were low political priorities and thus modeled on EU directives. Migrants should have a secure family life and future in Poland – at least according to the law.

In the case of Hungary, it reports:

The best chances for equal opportunities come through laws and organizations fighting discrimination. Political and educational opportunities are also limited. Foreigners living in Hungary for years are slightly discouraged from becoming Hungarian.’ (Huddleston et al, 2011).

The average for Polish policies is 43 points (in a scale of 100), which is described as halfway favorable, for Hungary the average is 47, which puts it in the same category.

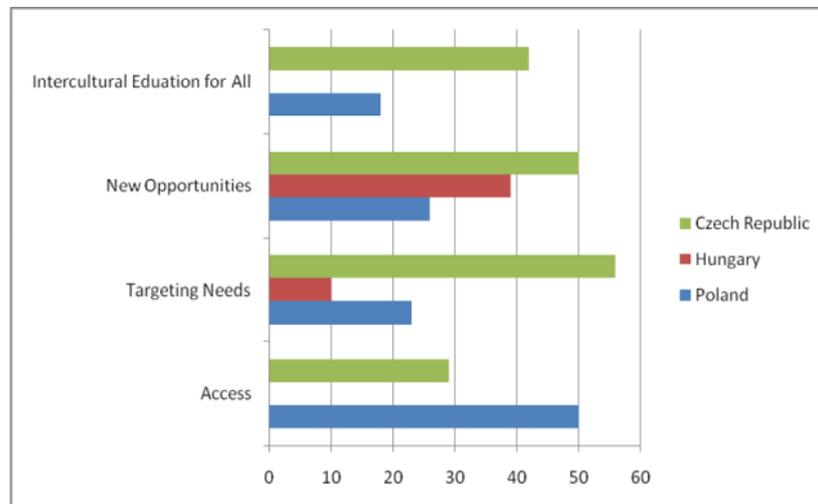
Nine countries - the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia - joined the European Union in 2004. Comparing their policies on the education for immigrants, the best in the group, according to the MIPEX report, is Estonia, where education policy scores 50. In the Visegrad countries, the leader is the Czech Republic with 44 points; Poland and Hungary get 29 points and 12 points respectively. The score for Hungary is the lowest for all countries.

The MIPEX analysis (see table 3) shows that, like most Central European countries, Poland does not prepare its schools well to integrate immigrant students into the classroom. Access is halfway favourable. All migrant children, regardless of their status, are treated the same as Polish students until they turn 18. Despite projects here and there, Poland’s education policy cannot meet the needs and opportunities of a diverse student body. Students may not become academically fluent in Polish because the free but weak language courses have limited duration and quality standards. Schools may or may not obtain special teaching assistants and organize immigrant language and culture courses with embassies. Intercultural education is largely absent from the curriculum and school life.

In the case of Hungary, the weakness of educational policy is shown particularly in the strands of ‘intercultural education for all’ and in immigrant access to the Hungarian education system. Hungary has limited strategies and budgets for intercultural education. Hungary denies undocumented migrants access to not only the full education system (as in half MIPEX countries), but also explicitly to compulsory education, and also for children of some legal migrants. Intercultural education scores a critically unfavourable zero. To get into the right school, authorities provide limited and outdated information. Schools are required neither to address newcomers’ specific needs and opportunities, nor teach all pupils about living in a diverse society.

Not all migrant pupils can access Czech education, but when they can, the modest targeted support for them is better than in most Central European countries. Only compulsory education is available for all migrant children, regardless of status. According to Czech laws and decrees, language courses should be needs-based, professionally taught, and regularly evaluated, while mother tongue and cultures should be available, at least for EU citizens and long-term residents. The potential school segregation of migrant pupils is not yet monitored and addressed in policy. Schools are required to teach multicultural education across the curriculum and get some state support on implementation.

Figure 3: Indicators for educational policy for immigration integration, case for Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland



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¹ The references provided here pertain to the symposium as a whole rather than to the individual paper.

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