How Migration Policy Shapes the Subjective Well-Being of the Non-immigrant Population in European Countries

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Abstract

Existing studies show that there is a positive association between pro-migrant integration policies and the subjective well-being of immigrants. However, there is a lack of research elucidating the relations between migrant integration policies and the subjective well-being of the host (i.e., non-migrant) population. This study is based on European data and uses multilevel analysis to clarify the relations between migrant integration policy (both as a whole and its eight separate components such as: Labor market mobility and Family reunion) and the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population in European countries. We examined relations between the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) for 22 countries in Europe and subjective well-being, as assessed by the European Social Survey (ESS) data. The results demonstrated that there is a positive relation between the MIPEX and subjective well-being for non-immigrants. Considering different components of the MIPEX separately, we found most of them being positively related to the subjective well-being of non-immigrants. As no negative relationship was identified between any of the eight MIPEX components and subjective well-being, policies in favor of immigrant integration also seem to benefit the non-immigrant population.

The number of international migrants worldwide is on the rise (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). European countries are no exception to this trend, with the number of migrants who move to these countries increasing consistently at a considerable rate (De Haas, 2018). Thus, the effects of external migration are of great significance for society in general, as well as the legal system more specifically. As the number of migrants continues to grow along with the considerable impact on the life of these societies, countries react to these challenges by amending their laws. Some countries tend to pursue a more restrictive immigrant

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policy, whereas others opt for a more integrative policy which—for example—provides immigrants with mobility, education, and status-attainment opportunities in the host country.

Immigrant integration policies are defined as the institutional practices adopted by state agencies to deal with the settlement of immigrants in host societies (Bourhis et al., 1997). Immigrant integration policies can be placed on a continuum ranging from "restrictive" at one end to "integrative"[1] and in favor of immigrants at the other. A special Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) was developed by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group to measure and compare immigration policies in different settings (Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2020). The MIPEX is a complex and rich multidimensional tool used to compare how various countries, within and outside the EU, provide migrants with "opportunities to participate in society" (European Commission, 2018). MIPEX includes 167 indicators (questions) that assess the following eight policy areas for integration: labor market mobility, family reunion, long-term residence, political participation, access to nationality, access to education, anti-discrimination, and attention to migrants' health needs. First published in 2004, a search for MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2020) in September 2020 generated approximately 3,000 results in Google Scholar, suggesting that it has had a significant influence over the last 15 years on how social scientists organize their understanding around the concept of migrant integration. Moreover, international key findings can be easily accessed by the public online (Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2020). Migrant integration policies can have many positive effects for migrants and immigrants and contribute to their integration into society (Fennema & Tillie, 2004).

However, migration policy affects not only immigrants, but also society in general (Weldon, 2006). Successful immigrant integration policies may reduce inequalities related to immigrant background, prevent conflict, and stabilize the societal system, and thus, contribute to both social and system integration (Archer, 1996; Lockwood, 1964). Integration seems to be key for subjective well-being among both the members of the host society and immigrants (Hadjar & Backes, 2013). While current research demonstrates that migrant integration policies indeed contribute to the subjective well-being of immigrants (Fennema & Tillie, 2004; Hadjar & Backes, 2013; Sand & Gruber, 2018), the effect these policies have on the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population has not been considered yet. Our study focuses on the relation between the MIPEX and subjective well-being of the population *without* an immigrant background. It also addresses in detail the association between each of the eight components included in this index and the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. Empirically, this study is based on data for 22 European countries.

Subjective Well-Being

There are different approaches to considering subjective well-being. Generally speaking, subjective well-being (SWB) constitutes the level of well-being experienced by people according to their own subjective evaluation of their lives (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2013). SWB encompasses a wide range of components, such as happiness, life satisfaction, hedonic balance, fulfillment, and at its core represents a positive affective and cognitive evaluation of one's life (Kim-Prieto et al., 2005). However, in most cases, empirical research does not consider this broad range of phenomena that may be treated as part of subjective well-being. The concept of SWB most often encompasses life satisfaction and positive affect (or pleasant emotions) per se (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2013; Kim-Prieto et al., 2005). Life satisfaction is a broad judgment of one's overall life that constitutes the cognitive component of subjective well-being (Diener, Inglehart, et al., 2013). As an indicator of positive affect, researchers often consider the level of happiness (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2013). Life satisfaction and happiness have been researched most thoroughly across

cultural settings and provide descriptions of subjective well-being from a cross-cultural perspective (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2013).

Subjective well-being is impacted by various life circumstances, including quality of life and prosperity (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002), as well as by the political regime and the degree of freedom, democracy and support extended to citizens (Altman et al., 2017). Research on the subject also suggests certain universal political factors, such as democratic governance and human rights that are related to subjective well-being across nations (Diener et al., 1995). Several studies demonstrate that pro-migrant integration policies (as a part of any society's political system) have a positive relation to the well-being of immigrants (Fennema & Tillie, 2004; Hadjar & Backes, 2013; Sand & Gruber, 2018). However, the extent to which a society's immigration policy is linked to the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population is a research question that remains unanswered.

Even though existing studies are lacking, we presume that the various immigration policies pursued by societies also have certain influences on the host population.

The systemic approach underpins the main theoretical basis for this assumption (von Bertalanffy, 2015). Society is a cohesive and open dynamic system and the elements of this system exist in dialectical interaction. Consequently, various policies, although targeted at specific societal elements, can also indirectly affect non-targeted segments of society through multiple connections and social mechanisms. Thus, a society's immigrant policy will undoubtedly affect the non-immigrant population, but the question is how.

A similar argument can be derived from the general materialist assumption of sociological classics such as Marx (1977/1859) and Weber (1978/1921): Structural conditions shape the lives of individuals and also their thoughts and perceptions—and, as Weber emphasizes in particular— there is also a feedback of individual thoughts and behavior towards the structural conditions. More recently, Oishi and Graham (2010) have argued the importance of integrating social ecological perspectives in psychology, and researchers have been increasingly focusing on the interaction between contextual and psychological process variables (e.g., Jurcik et al., 2014, 2019). Hence, structural conditions may moderate or mediate certain behaviors at individual and local levels.

Applied to the present research issue, we may argue that a pro-integrative migration policy may create a certain psychological environment in the mainstream society that is characterized by a higher degree of openness and freedom, which in turn may contribute to the subjective well-being of the country's population as a whole.

On the other hand, an accommodating integration policy may also attract immigrants from other cultural groups who create additional competition for limited resources, thus adversely affecting the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. Such a process and outcome would be consistent with conflict and group threat theories (Van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014). Therefore, for non-immigrants, the association between migrant integration policies and subjective well-being is not obvious, and may even lead researchers to entertain contrasting hypotheses.

A general conceptual model to theorize subjective well-being (SWB) that is frequently used in SWB research is the Social Production Function Theory by Lindenberg (1996) and colleagues (Ormel et al., 1999). According to this framework, macro factors such as welfare policies and healthcare shape SWB; more specifically, these macro factors facilitate the production of first-order instrumental goals to produce well-being, namely stimulation (keeping an optimal arousal level), comfort (satisfaction of physiological needs and security needs), status (control over resources), behavioral confirmation (approval for doing the "right things," conforming to norms of reference groups), and affection (positive relationships to others). Hadjar and Backes (2013) strongly link these factors to the integration of immigrant and non-migrant members of a society and SWB as a final integration outcome. Turning to the current research, the main question is

how migrant integration policies, as mirrored in the MIPEX and its dimensions, would impact the conditions for the production of SWB among *non*-immigrants.

Relations between Migrant Integration Policies and the Subjective Well-Being of the non-Immigrant Population

Although migration policies pursued by a society are by definition focused on immigrants, they inevitably have an indirect effect on the host population as well. In this section, we will discuss the possible social and psychological mechanisms by which a migrant integration policy may influence the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. Current research shows that a migrant integration policy has a number of positive effects for both immigrants and the host population.

Immigrant Integration Policy and Social Capital

More than anything else, a pro-integrative migration policy may help societies accumulate social capital (Reeskens, 2010). If national institutions emphasize equality among all citizens and are impartially responsive towards their residents, then they may contribute to individual levels of generalized trust (Reeskens, 2010), one of the most essential elements of social capital (see Putnam, 2000). In turn, social capital also contributes to the subjective well-being of the entire population (Helliwell, 2001). Governments that grant immigrants the same rights as the native population, as well as those governments that treat foreigners and natives equally, have been found to be better at fostering trust among the general population (Reeskens, 2010).

Immigrant Integration Policy and Perceived Threat from Migrants

Society-level trust norms facilitated by tolerant migrant integration policies may decrease the perceived group threat from migrants within the host population. Previous research on group norms in intergroup relations would be concordant with such a conjecture (Pettigrew, 1991) as pro-integration policies may provide a basis for social norms that promote adequate intergroup relations. Thus, if policy-level interaction norms are generally more tolerant, immigrants, and minorities may face a more broad-minded attitude from the majority. In other words, under such conditions, members of the ethnic majority will be less likely to perceive immigrants as a threat to themselves and their culture. Indeed, one empirical study conducted using the MIPEX demonstrated that an integrative migrant policy is negatively correlated with perceived threat from immigrants (Schlueter et al., 2013). Furthermore, a reduction in intergroup threat and intergroup anxiety in society may plausibly serve to bolster the subjective well-being of the ethnic majority.

Immigrant Integration Policy and General Welfare

Most importantly, however, in addition to the fulfillment of humanitarian goals for immigrant support, the development and implementation of migrant integration policies aim to make life in a society more favorable for the native population. In other words, by helping with the sociocultural adaption and integration of immigrants, society seeks to make the life of its population more prosperous overall. In short, migrants become productive members of society. Moreover, a such policies allow societies to remain relatively open by avoiding the imposition of too many restrictions, and in general, people are happier in societies which have more open social norms and are more tolerant (Inglehart et al., 2008).

In other words, implementing an integrative immigrant policy changes legislation in related areas and thereby reduces restrictions, discrimination, and inequality in the society as a whole. As a result, living in a society becomes more comfortable for both immigrants and other, larger segments of the population. We recognize, however, that openness to values and ideas is a relative term that exists on a continuum, and that at extremes at either end of this continuum could be maladaptive for any given society. This argument may be illustrated by an example from the educational sphere in Russia. While previously a child could only attend schools near the place of their permanent residence, this rule is no longer in effect. This facilitates access to education not only for external, but also for non-immigrants, thus increasing comfort and enhancing well-being for all segments of society. Choosing an educational path and moving more freely between schools regardless of where they live allows Russians to get a better education (Ivaniushina & Williams, 2019). In turn, research shows that the level of education is positively associated with people's subjective well-being (Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). Furthermore, the establishment of ethnic schools (including after school programs)—as done both by diasporas and native ethnic minorities in Russia—may benefit the entire population, as minority populations may perceive opportunities to preserve their culture and language, which may reduce conflicts in society and positively impact the subjective well-being of all. Education in the national language and with an ethno-cultural component allows minorities and migrants to preserve and maintain their ethnic identity. In turn, research shows that ethnic identity is positively associated with the subjective well-being of the individual (Abu-Rayya & Abu-Rayya, 2009). Positive ethnic identity is also associated with ethnic tolerance (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2003a), which helps reduce inter-ethnic conflicts (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2003b). Such policies may not only support ethnic specific programs, but also facilitate the integration of newcomers to mainstream schools, and thereby prevent problems related to ethnic segregation.

Consequently, we see that actions that enhance access to education for migrants may also improve the lives of the non-immigrant population, thereby potentially increasing the well-being of the population at large. We can find similar examples relating to other components of MIPEX. Accordingly, countries with an integrative policy towards immigrants have the potential to develop greater social bonds between diverse ethnic groups, given that a society operates as a unified system with interconnected laws. As a result, the non-immigrant population has the potential to benefit from a legal system which promotes the integration of newcomers, while respecting the needs of the host population (e.g., filling pre-existing employment shortages).

Therefore we can formulate the following basic hypothesis of our study:

The more immigrant policies are in favour of immigrant integration, the higher the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population in society.

Aspects of Immigrants' Integration

The Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) was designed to measure and compare immigration policies in different countries (Huddleston et al., 2015). MIPEX includes the following eight policy areas for integration: labor market access, family reunion, long term residence, political participation, access to nationality, access to education, anti-discrimination, and attention to migrants' health needs. This index was developed by the Barcelona Center for International Affairs and the European Migration Policy Group (MPG), based on a specific and political concept of integration adopted in the European Union. The MIPEX questionnaire, which is used to interview experts, includes 167 questions related to the eight above-mentioned areas of legislation (Galyapina et al., 2019; Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2020). As both the general MIPEX and its eight components are at the core of the present study, we examine the contents of these eight areas of legislation below.

(1) *Labor market access.* This component relates to the general question of whether immigrants have labor rights and opportunities comparable to nationals in gaining access to work and improving their skills. This includes sub-issues such as equity in immigrants' and nationals' access to work and job change opportunities, access to general support and workers' rights.

(2) *Family reunion.* This component relates to the general question: do immigrants have the right to reunite with their families This includes sub-issues such as eligibility (can all immigrants apply for the sponsorship of their entire family), conditions for acquisition of status (do immigrants applying for family reunion have to comply with the same basic conditions as nationals?), security of status, and rights associated with status.

(3) *Access to education.* This component relates to the general question: are immigrant children encouraged to study and develop along with the children of nationals? This includes sub-issues such as access (do all children, regardless of their legal status, have equal access to all levels of education?), targeting needs (do immigrant students, their parents, and teachers have the right to the consideration of their special needs in the education system?), and intercultural education for all.

(4) *Political participation.* This component relates to the general question: do immigrants have opportunities to participate in political life comparable to those available to nationals? This includes sub-issues such as electoral rights and political liberties.

(5) *Permanent residence.* This component relates to the general question: do immigrants have access to a permanent residence permit? This includes sub-issues such as eligibility, conditions for acquisition of status, security of status (does the state protect applicants from discretionary procedures?), and rights associated with status.

(6) *Access to nationality.* This component includes sub-issues such as eligibility (how long should immigrants wait for naturalization?), conditions for acquisition, security of status (does the state protect applicants from discretionary procedures?), dual nationality (can immigrants and their children who have obtained citizenship of that state also be nationals of other states?).

(7) *Anti-discrimination.* This component relates to the general question: are all residents of the state effectively protected from racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination? This includes sub-issues such as definitions and concepts (presence in regulations—is everyone living in the country protected from racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination?), fields of application, enforcement mechanisms, equality policies (does the state provide protection against discrimination for all residents of the state?).

(8) *Attention to immigrants' health needs.* This component relates to the general question: does the healthcare system meet the needs of immigrants? This includes sub-issues such as entitlement to health services (do immigrants have the same healthcare-related rights as nationals?), policies to facilitate access, responsiveness of health services.

As we will outline in more detail in the method section, all expert ratings regarding the different components are averaged to assign a certain rating between the poles of policies being *critically unfavorable* to policies being *very favorable* toward immigrant integration. Studies conducted on the basis of MIPEX data show that a pro-integrative immigrant policy is associated with a number of positive effects for immigrants and contributes to their overall social integration (Fennema & Tillie, 2004; Hadjar & Backes, 2013).

While most studies focus on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) in general, the present study will apply a more detailed perspective by examining the different MIPEX dimensions individually, as it is quite likely that these immigrant integration policy components may show differential influences on the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. This analysis is meaningful as some of these components are rather "narrow" and directed specifically

at immigrants, while others are associated with broader legislative changes, and at face value seem to have the potential to more directly influence the subjective well-being of non-immigrants. For example, although it is an unanswered empirical question, family reunion or access to nationality seem at first glance to be less relevant for the subjective well-being of non-immigrants compared to, say, liberal legislation in labor market mobility, or access to education, which in contrast, may plausibly have a stronger impact on the entire society. As this part of the analysis is rather explorative, we refrain from deducing specific hypotheses, but formulate the following additional research question: What is the relation between each of the eight migrant integration policy components and the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population in our sample of European countries? Testing the linkage between each of the MIPEX components and SWB will provide us with additional data on the contribution of each integration policy aspect to the SWB of the host population in European countries.

Method

Design of the Study

We combined different data sources for this study to create an aggregated database appropriate for multilevel analysis; that is, individual data was nested within countries. The first data base is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) for 2014 (country data, macro level), and the second is the European Social Survey (ESS) for 2016 to 2017 (individual level data). By selecting these two data bases, we allowed for a time-lag of some years between the assumed predictor (immigration policy) and the assumed dependent variable (subjective well-being). Additionally, we included data from different sources, as we controlled for macro-level variables (GDP, unemployment rate, immigrant proportion) that may have a potential correlation with human well-being.

As outlined above, the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) data includes ratings on immigration policies in different countries (Huddleston et al., 2015). Each indicator reflects the migrant policy in a country from the least favorable and most non-compliant with EU standards (1 point) to the most favorable and closest to EU standards (3 points). If a country does not have a policy for a specific indicator, it is awarded 1 point. The points earned are converted to a 100-point scale: 1 corresponds to 0 points, 2 to 50 points, and 3 to 100 points. According to the established procedure, the MIPEX evaluation process takes place in two rounds. First, one of the three responses is chosen by a special selection of migration experts in a specific country. They supplement and substantiate their choice with comments reflecting the national legislation. After this assessment, there is an anonymous peer review round, wherein another group of experts receives the completed questionnaires and agrees or disagrees with the expert assessments. If they disagree, reviewers must also justify their answer. Afterward, moderated anonymous discussions are held between the experts and reviewers. Upon reaching a consensus on the answers to controversial questions, the average score is calculated. Then, the final score is determined for each subsection and for each of the eight areas on a scale from 0 to 100, where a score of 0 indicates that the policy is critically unfavorable for migrant integration; other ranges and descriptors are: 1 to 20 unfavorable, 21 to 40—partially unfavorable, 41 to 59—partially favorable, 60 to 79—favorable, 80 to 100—very favorable (also, see MIPEX methodology described here: http://www.mipex.eu/methodology).

The European Social Survey (2020) is a European comparative cross-country project in the social sciences. The ESS aims to obtain data on the opinions, values, and attitudes of Europeans in the main areas of life: family, politics, religion, social structure, and social inequality, quality of life, along with other areas. Studies that use the ESS have a similar methodology and the data obtained in different countries and over different years are comparable. The survey has been

conducted biannually since 2002. The study in every country is based on the principles of maximum comparability, including in the translation of tools, sampling, survey methods, quality control procedures, data processing, and presentation. The survey is conducted in each country through a personal interview at the respondents' home (about 60 minutes long) using a random probabilistic sample of the population over 15 years of age. 2,000 to 2,500 respondents are surveyed in each country. Additional information regarding the European Social Survey and all empirical data can be found on the website: https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

We selected 23 European countries for which immigration policy indicators were available, and excluded all non-nationals from the samples. The final pooled sample size comprised of $N_i=37,360$ individuals nested in $N_j=23$ European countries, namely: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, and Slovenia.

We only included non-immigrants in our analyzes, defined as respondents who had been born in the country where the ESS data were gathered. Thus, when speaking about non-immigrants, by definition, this may also include second or third generation immigrants and not only those from the ethnic majority. As a result, our sample of non-immigrants who were born in the European country and who were its citizens included 37,511 people (17,746 men and 19,759 women). The average age of the respondents was 49.5 ($SD=18.72$), and the median education score (just as in the case of migrants) was 4, which corresponds to having received an upper secondary general education certificate in the ESS study.

Variables

Dependent variable. In our study, the dependent variable was the subjective well-being of the respondents, which was assessed using two ESS questions to assess life satisfaction and the level of happiness. To assess life satisfaction, we used the following question: "How satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?" Response options were given in an ordinal scale (from 0 = extremely dissatisfied, to 10 = extremely satisfied). To assess the level of happiness, we used the following question: "Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?" Response options were given in an ordinal scale (from 0 = extremely unhappy, to 10 = extremely happy). Next, we calculated a composite score for these two questions, and used it as a dependent variable. Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for these two items was .81, suggesting that they can be combined into one variable.

Independent variable. Our central independent variable was the 2014 policy assessments of the Migration Policy Index (MIPEX) which operationalizes country-level immigrant integration policies. This measurement of the integration policies of European countries combines several—above mentioned—desirable features. First, the MIPEX comprises eight important policy strands. Second, the MIPEX evaluates each policy domain using scores between 0 (worst practice) and 100 (best practice).

Control variables. To determine the genuine effects of the variables of interest, we control for certain well-studied drivers of subjective well-being on the individual and on the macro level. We used five macro-level and micro-level control variables.

(a) *Micro-level variables.*
1. Age. The respondent's age was recorded as the number of complete years.
2. Education. We classified three levels of education, using the ES-ISCED classification (International Standard Classification of Education) of the ESS that originally

comprises seven classifications of the highest educational degree received by an individual until the data gathering.

3. Household's total net income, all sources, which varied from 1st to 10th decile.

(b) Macro-level variables.

1. GDP. We estimated the Gross domestic product (GDP) according to the data of International Monetary Fund. This indicator needed to be controlled for, as GDP reflects the prosperity of a country as a whole, and as a result affects subjective well-being.

2. Unemployment rate. We used unemployment data for 23 European countries from the Trading Economics (2016) website. We controlled for this variable, as the unemployment rate also produces a significant effect on the well-being of people in the country (Mousteri et al., 2018).

3. Proportion of immigrants in the country. We used data regarding the proportion of immigrants per 1,000 locals in each of the European countries included in the research. For this, we used the Eurostat (2017) data. We also used data from separate sources for Switzerland (Nguyen, 2017) and Russia (Opalev & Myazina, 2015)

Statistical Analysis

We processed the data using two-level multilevel regression analysis (MLM) with STATA. We used this method because we wanted to analyze the association between macro-level variables (MIPEX and its components) and individual well-being measured at the micro-level (i.e., answers of the respondents). Figure 1 shows a conceptual diagram illustrating the tested model.

With regard to the limited number of countries on the macro level, we can only include a certain number of macro level factors. We will model a maximum of four macro level factors in one model. As this may be already above the possible number of macro level main effects, we will additionally test the different macro level factors in less complex models. We selected GDP as a major control variable, as it is strongly linked to SWB on the macro level and is also associated with social policy expenditures to a certain extent. The proportion of immigrants and the unemployment rate are modeled as these may be major factors of non-immigrants' SWB if a perceived threat argument is applied (Schlueter et al., 2013).

Results

In the first step of the analysis, we estimated multilevel models including the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) as a predictor step-wise, including all predictors to give an impression of the role of the different variables. In the second of the analysis, we estimated the full model (i.e., model V), testing each of the eight MIPEX components separately.

Table 1 displays five models that demonstrated a relationship between MIPEX and subjective well-being with the control variables considered at micro and macro levels.

Model I presented in Table 1 shows the relationship between sociodemographic control variables and subjective well-being on the micro level. The model indicates that people with a higher education have a higher subjective well-being. Furthermore, women demonstrate a higher level of subjective well-being than men. Moreover, subjective well-being is lower for older age groups compared to the reference group (i.e., from age 25–39 to 40–55). Thereafter, the relationship between age and subjective well-being becomes statistically insignificant by age 55 to 69. By age 70 to 84, a positive relation between age and subjective well-being emerges.

In Model II, we added our main predictor, MIPEX, at the macro level. The second model indicates that an integrative immigration policy is positively linked to the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population.
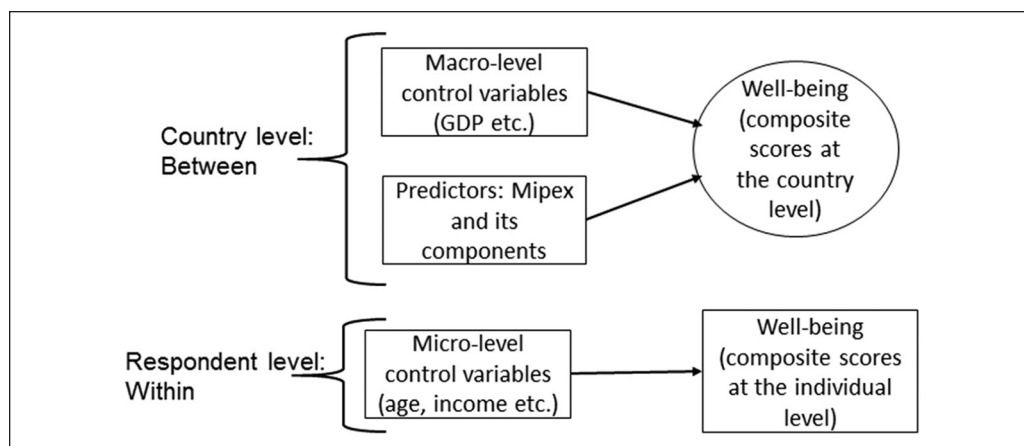
Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of the tested multilevel model including macro-level and respondent level variables.

In Model III, we evaluate the role of macro-level control variables that can be related to subjective well-being (GDP and unemployment rate), and the variable that may determine the existence of migrant integration policy in the country (number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants of the country). Although none of the macro controls shows a significant effect in Model III, we decided to also include them in the more complex models, as suppression effects may occur. However, Model IV reveals that only MIPEX has a significant impact, while GDP, unemployment rate, and the proportion of immigrants in the country are not statistically significant in relation to the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population of European countries. When these control variables are introduced at the macro level, the positive and statistically significant relationship between an integrative migrant policy and subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population of European countries remains unchanged.

In Model V, we also control for the interaction between MIPEX and the proportion of immigrants in the country, as immigration policies may be even more crucial in countries with a large proportion of immigrants. The interaction effect indicates a positive, weak, but statistically significant effect. Thus, the positive effect of the MIPEX on subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population is even stronger when a country is characterized by a higher proportion of immigrants. The most important outcome of model V, however, is that the strength of the relationship between MIPEX and subjective well-being increases slightly when controlling for the interaction between MIPEX and the proportion of immigrants in the country. Interestingly, another suppression effect is revealed in this model, as the effect of proportion of immigrants gains strength and becomes significant (Watson et al., 2013).

Table 2 presents models that illustrate the relationship between individual MIPEX components and the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant populations in European countries. In each of these models, we applied the same controls as in complex Model V shown in Table 1. However, to save space, we only present the results regarding the eight MIPEX components, since the relationships between control variables were the same as in models I to IV presented in Table 1. Table 2 indicates that four of the eight MIPEX components have a positive and statistically significant effect on subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population (Labor market mobility, Access to education, Political participation, Attention to migrants' health needs). Furthermore, one of the components (Permanent residence) showed a positive relationship at the trend level. Three of the eight MIPEX components definitely did not show a statistically

Table 1. Effects on SWB, Focus: MIPEX, Multilevel Models with Random Intercepts, Robust Standard Errors.

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
Fixed effects					
Country level effects					
MIPEX (mean-centered)		.03** (.01)		.03** (.01)	.04** (.01)
Country level controls					
GDP per capita (mean-centered)			−.00 (.00)	−.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Proportion of immigrants in country (mean-centered)			.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.06** (.02)
Unemployment rate (mean-centered)			−.03 (.05)	−.04 (.04)	−.01 (.02)
Interaction MIPEX (mean-centered) × Proportion of immigrants (mean-centered)					.001*** (.00)
Individual level					
Individual level controls					
Education [Ref. compulsory education]					
Upper secondary education	.18*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)
Higher education (Bachelor, Master degree or above)	.20*** (.04)	.20*** (.04)	.20*** (.04)	.20*** (.04)	.20*** (.04)
Gender [Ref. female]					
Male	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)
Income (relative income)	.17*** (.01)	.17*** (.01)	.17*** (.01)	.17*** (.01)	.17*** (.01)
Age [Ref. 25–39]					
Age, 40–54 years	−.29*** (.05)	−.29*** (.05)	−.29*** (.05)	−.29*** (.05)	−.29*** (.05)
Age, 55–69 years	−.07 (.05)	−.07 (.05)	−.07 (.05)	−.07 (.05)	−.07 (.05)
Age, 70–84 years	.18* (.09)	.18* (.09)	.18* (.09)	.18* (.09)	.18* (.09)
Constant/intercept	6.28*** (.17)	6.25*** (.15)	6.26*** (.16)	6.24*** (.14)	6.49*** (.14)
Random effect					
SD constant (country)	.62 (.10)	.50 (.08)	.59 (.08)	.48 (.07)	.36 (.05)
SD residual (individual level)	1.67 (.05)	1.67 (.05)	1.67 (.05)	1.67 (.05)	1.67 (.05)
Wald Chi-Square	276.63	305.84	399.98	411.72	1,092.60
Log pseudolikelihood	−64,221.13	−64,216.94	−64,219.91	−64,215.92	−64,209.43
$p >$ Chi-Square	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Data source. ESS 2018; N individuals = 37,511, N countries = 22; weight: pweight (population size weight).

Notes. nullmodell: *SD* constant (country) = .65 (.09); *SD* residual (individual level) = 1.74 (.04).

*$p <$ .05. **$p <$ .01. ***$p <$ .001.

Table 2. Effects on SWB, Focus: MIPEX Dimensions, Multilevel Models with Random Intercepts, Robust Standard Errors.

	Fixed effect (*SE*) MIPEX dimension	Random effects		Log pseudolikelihood
		SD constant (country)	*SD* residual (individual level)	
Country level effects				
MIPEX dimension				
Labor market mobility (Model IV.1)	.02* (.01)	.51 (.07)	1.67 (.05)	−64,217.22
Family reunion (Model IV.2)	.00 (.01)	.58 (.08)	1.67 (.05)	−64,219.90
Access to education (Model IV.3)	.02** (.01)	.50 (.06)	1.67 (.05)	−64,216.68
Political participation (Model IV.4)	.02*** (.00)	.43 (.06)	1.67 (.05)	−64,213.39
Permanent residence (Model IV.5)	.02† (.01)	.56 (.08)	1.67 (.05)	−64,218.84
Access to nationality (Model IV.6)	.01 (.01)	.57 (.07)	1.67 (.05)	−64,219.38
Anti-discrimination (Model IV.7)	−.00 (.01)	.59 (.08)	1.67 (.05)	−64,219.90
Attention to migrants' health needs (Model IV.8)	.03*** (.01)	.41 (.05)	1.67 (.05)	−64,212.86

Data source. ESS 2018; *N* individuals = 37,511, *N* countries = 22; weight: pweight (population size weight).
Notes. Controlled for country level factors (GDP per capita, Proportion of immigrants in country, Unemployment rate) and individual level factors (education, gender, income, age).
Null model: *SD* constant (country) = .65 (.09); *SD* residual (individual level) = 1.74 (.04).
†< = .10. *p < .05. **p <. 01. ***p <. 001.

significant relationship with the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population (Family reunion, Access to nationality, Anti-discrimination).

Discussion

The objectives of our study related to two research innovations. First, we examined the impact of an integrative immigration policy for immigrants on the non-immigrant population, while previous assessments have only analyzed the relationship of an integrative immigration policy and the well-being and adaptation of immigrants. Secondly, while previous studies have used the entire MIPEX index as a predictor, our study also used the eight individual MIPEX components as predictors, allowing us to precisely determine which of the elements of a more comprehensive migrant integration policy contribute to the well-being of the non-immigrant population.

Our study confirmed the hypothesis that there is a positive association between migrant integration policy and subjective well-being for the host population of European countries. Consequently, we may conclude that migrant integration policies are related to subjective well-being not only for a relatively small section of society (immigrants), but for the society as a whole. Moreover, our findings indicated that policies favoring immigrants' integration were not associated with any negative outcomes for the non-immigrant population.

An important novel aspect of our study is the consideration of the particular MIPEX components that contribute to the well-being of the non-immigrant population. Our analysis indicated that components of the migrant integration policy can be divided into two groups. The first group

include components such as family reunion, access to nationality, anti-discrimination policies that seem to be specifically directed towards immigrants and do not affect the non-immigrant population—neither positively nor negatively. The second group consist of integration policy components that have a positive impact on non-immigrants subjective well-being, and thus for the broader society. Such policy measures relate to labor market mobility, access to education, political participation, permanent residence, and attention to migrants' health needs.

We believe that another important finding from the study is that there is an interaction effect of MIPEX and the proportion of immigrants in a society on subjective well-being. Including this interaction effect slightly strengthened the positive relationship between MIPEX and subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. Thus, policies in favor of immigrant integration seem to particularly pay off in countries with a larger immigrant population. Furthermore, a suppression effect indicated that after considering this interplay between MIPEX and proportion of immigrants, the positive main effect of proportion of immigrants also reached the significance threshold (0.1%). All of the above indicates that societies with a larger proportion of immigrants and a well-developed integration policy are happier overall than societies with a less developed immigration policy and/or a lower immigrant proportion. Polices in favor of the inclusion of immigrants in all areas of societal life seem to be beneficial. Accordingly, we can cautiously conclude that the inflow of immigrants into a country, subject to the existence of a well-developed integration policy, is generally favorable for the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. We note that this finding is tentative because most of the data gathered here was prior to the 2015 migrant crisis and does not include a finer grained analysis of variables that may influence the role of well-being (see strengths and limitations section; see also Tatarko & Jurcik, 2020).

In order to understand how migrant integration policy can improve the well-being of both immigrants and the host population in countries, in particular when there are larger numbers of immigrants, we refer back to theory. Immigration policies in favor of immigrants' integration can prevent both discontent and frustration in a host population (Freeman, 1997). Another argument relates to the general characteristics of societies that employ immigration-friendly policies: Immigrant integration policies seem to be productive for the subjective well-being of societies in general and not only for immigrants, as they are underpinned by values and norms of equality, openness, equal opportunities, and mutual aid. Such societies seem to also cater for the instrumental goals needed to produce well-being among both non-immigrants and immigrants—such as stimulation, comfort, status, affect, and behavioral confirmation (see Social Production Function Theory; Lindenberg, 1996). This explanation is also supported by the fact that the subjective well-being of the host population was found *not* to be related to migration policy domains that are generally applicable to and benefit immigrants much more specifically (i.e., access to nationality, anti-discrimination). In contrast, the policy domains that appear to have a broader effect on the social and economic environment in a society (i.e., labor market access, permanent residence, political participation, health) demonstrate a positive relation with subjective well-being. Well-developed laws regulating the labor market, political participation, health, freedom of residency, freedom of movement and freedom of migration may have a positive effect on immigrants and other members of a society alike.

Considering research centering on the MIPEX, it appears to be meaningful to study both the general MIPEX and its different components to identify best policy practices, as our closer examination of the components of the individual Migrant Integration Policy Index revealed that only half of the integration policy components show an effect on the subjective well-being of non-immigrants while the other half did not. In any case, none of the policies showed a negative relation with well-being in the host population.

Regarding the nature of causality, an argument provided by Weldon (2006) may be of interest. He argues that tolerance towards ethnic minorities is related to a country's minority-related laws and policies. However, these laws and policies represent institutionalized cultural norms and

traditions. In other words, policy depends on culture, but at the same time, policy may influence tolerance to minorities. Weldon (2006, p. 333) acknowledges that causality may operate in the opposite direction: the reason a state has less institutionalization of the dominant ethnic tradition is precisely because the native population is more open and tolerant in the first place. However, there are good reasons to believe that institutions have a significant impact on tolerance judgments. Consequently, we may assume that if policy is linked to culture, changes in policy and laws may partially contribute to a cultural group's tolerance towards minorities. Higher tolerance towards minorities may also in turn contribute to lower perceived intergroup threat, which may contribute to a society's subjective well-being. It is quite possible that a high standard of living, which ensures high subjective well-being, may also facilitate and promote the introduction of migrant integration policies. We also acknowledge that numerous countries in our data set were exposed to communist rule, a variable which has been associated with lower life satisfaction (e.g., Inglehart & Klingemann, 2000; see also Jurcik et al., 2013). We believe that including these additional variables could be the focus of further empirical studies that will use a more complex research design.

Strengths and Limitations

Our study is one of the first to examine the relation between migrant integration policies and well-being of the non-immigrant population. We had access to an extensive sample representing 22 European countries. However, not all EU countries were represented and not all aspects of migration policies were examined in detail (e.g., accessibility to welfare benefit payments). The rather low number of countries on the macro level also did not allow to control for further third-variable impacts on the macro level. However, controlling for GDP, unemployment rate and proportion of immigrants, allowed us to take into account major mechanisms that may also have an impact on subjective well-being. Further, as with other correlational studies on this topic, our findings raise the question: Is it true that migrant integration policies introduce certain norms and values into a society, making it more egalitarian and thus resulting in a better life for the ethnic majority? Or is the opposite relationship at play; that is, is there a certain degree of political and legislative maturity that has already generated well-being among the population, thus allowing for migrant integration policies? Naturally, we considered this potential issue in our study design, which is why we used MIPEX data for 2014, and subjective well-being data from the 2016 ESS, that is, chronologically, the hypothetical cause preceded the possible effect. Nevertheless, our study covers only a short time-span and is still correlational, and we do not deny that alternative mechanisms linking migrant integration policy to the subjective well-being of a country's population should also be tested.

   We also recognize that much of the data we analyzed was gathered prior to the effects of the 2015 migrant crisis and some of the sociopolitical tensions that have occurred in European countries since that time. It is unclear if the current findings would hold in a replication study under the current conditions. We also recognize that other research may seem inconsistent with our own. For instance, a recent meta-analysis showed a negative relation between ethnic diversity and trust when pooling the findings from 87 studies (Dinesen et al., 2020). Concomitantly, ethnic diversity is not the same as migration (i.e., migrants can be relatively ethnically similar to the host population, and host populations are becoming more ethnically diverse with time), and trust and well-being are also likely overlapping but still distinct concepts. It is also not fully clear how diversity management policies and strategies may mitigate these negative effects, similar to policies that facilitate integration. These contrasts bring up some important questions, however. Migrants within European countries have historically tended to receive migrants from within the region who share numerous similarities (e.g., in language, religion, and cultural practices), and it is only until more recently that we have seen an influx of migrants from more culturally distant

groups. Do host societies with large and more culturally distant groups benefit from integrative policies in the same way? Hence, recent developments provide even more impetus to replicate our study in future samples of the MIPEX and ESS and use a more finely grained analysis.

Future Research

The main aim of our research was quite focused: we were interested in *to what extent* migrant integration policies and their components were related to the subjective well-being of the host population in European countries. Further research may possibly be focused on identifying the particular social mechanisms that make the migrant integration policy targeted at immigrants produce an effect on the ethnic majority or the host population. This knowledge will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that multiculturalism plays in forming the internal policies of societies characterized by ethnic diversity or a high inflow of immigrants from other cultures.

More longitudinal research needs to be conducted examining migration policies and well-being in order to better grasp the direction of the causal relation. Third variables including historical factors, general social policy indicators and standards of living (e.g., government ideology unrelated to migration, such as years under communism or socialism), need to be taken into account as other authors have reported negative links between former communist rule and life satisfaction (see Inglehart & Klingemann, 2000). It is therefore possible that some of our findings may have been partly driven by confounders (i.e., former communist countries tend to have less developed migration policies).

Additional migration policies need to be examined such as accessibility to welfare, given that generous welfare programs may benefit migrants who experience higher unemployment rates, but may lead to increased (plausibly unwanted) taxation of the general population. Psychological moderators such as perceived cultural distance between immigrants and the host population, as well as acculturation differences, still need to be considered in migration policy-well-being research. Most of our data was collected before the intensification of the migration crisis, which occurred around 2015. As we implied above, the recent migration crisis has dramatically changed the composition of some European societies in a short period of time (e.g., Germany, Sweden) and whether the current findings will generalize to the future studies, given some of the negative links between diversity and trust (e.g., Dinesen et al., 2020), remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The applied value of our research may lie in the recommendation that societies, where migrant integration policy is still underdeveloped, should begin development of this policy, and most notably in the areas that also contribute to the subjective well-being of the non-immigrant population. This will not only improve the lives of immigrants, but also assist in resolving certain social problems within the non-immigrant population and prevent potential strains in the relationship between immigrants and the non-immigrant population. The effect of the interaction between migrant integration policy and the proportion of immigrants shows that in countries where the proportion of immigrants is higher, the relationship between migrant integration policy and well-being is higher. Thus, the cultural diversity and openness of the country, combined with a reasonable migrant integration policy, can contribute to the higher well-being of non-immigrants.

This study attempted to make an important scientific contribution to understanding the effect migrant integration policies have on societies in general. Although migrant integration policies are targeted at integrating immigrants into society and are positively related with their subjective well-being, migrant integration policies are also positively related with the subjective well-being of the host population or the ethnic majority. Hence, despite the challenges societies sometimes

face in the course of integrating immigrants and on their path to becoming more culturally pluralistic, numerous (but not all) migrant integration policies appear to be linked to the well-being of society as a whole. Immigration can foster the subjective well-being of a society if policy measures are taken in strong favor of immigrants' integration. Whether our findings can be replicated in various social and historical contexts is another question, however. Future studies will need to examine whether our findings hold during and after times of crisis (e.g., larger than usual influx of migration) and with varying cultural distance between migrant and host population groups.

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Note

1. We use variations of "integration" interchangeably throughout the text, such as "integrative," "pro-integrative," or "pro-migrant integration" policies, to denote policies which support the participation of migrants in mainstream society.

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