

Country analysis of immigration policies



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Throughout history, the handling of integration of immigrants in any country has been a pressing political issue. There is no exception in Europe. Although there has been a recent spike in favorable feeling towards minorities in Europe, there are still countries, such as Italy or Germany, that have a deep rooted hatred towards some groups. On the other hand, Countries like France, and Sweden have shown upward movement in the public opinion towards minority groups. Some of the more blatantly discriminated groups in Europe are people who identify as Muslim, and those who identify as Roma. These two groups have long heritages in Europe, and have faced discrimination throughout their history. Because France is has been noticeably proposing policies to help integrate the minority population, it serves as a good country to compare to those that hold a less favorable view on their minorities, such as Greece. The population of a country is key in defining an identity for that country, and some countries try harder than others to alter who represents them.

Although most countries in Europe have a problem integrating immigrants into their social and political systems, France has been a country that has shown the most potential for integration. The recent events occurring in Paris, involving Muslim radicals killing 13 political cartoonists, hasn't helped with integration, but the progress is more evident on other levels. A good benchmark in the upward trend of French opinion on minorities is when Nicholas Sarkozy took office in 2007. Three Muslims, Rama Yade, Rachida Dati and Fadela Amara, were named Secretary of State for Human Rights, Minister of Justice, and the Minister responsible for city housing, respectively. These are huge jobs that have major influence in policies that affect

minorities. Part of having a collective identity is integrating the people who aren't originally from the country being represented, and minority integration into the government of France is an enormous step forward towards full integration of minorities in France. " If three-quarters of naturalized immigrants " feel French," nationality is not everything. The adoption of a French national feeling among non-naturalized immigrants is quite noteworthy here: more than half of non-naturalized immigrants feel French, and two-thirds of those from North Africa. If a result deserves comment, it is not the lack of adoption of national identity by immigrants and their descendants but rather the strength of that adoption" (Simon, 2012). This quote directly addresses the idea that French immigrants feel a sense of collective identity. In comparison to other countries, this number is very high, and has been increasing steadily. Another aspect that heavily affects the integration of immigrants into a given country is the accessibility of immigration. One of the biggest aspects of French immigration is the idea of dual-citizenship. This means citizens of foreign countries can hold their citizenship in that country, while also becoming a citizen of France. Although Poland holds a similar policy, France allows for an easier transition to citizenship as it promotes children who have been in France to remain in France, while allowing them to keep their original heritage. According to Simon, " . . . 64 percent of immigrants who arrived before the age of 10 acquired French citizenship, as did 53 percent of those who came between the ages of 10 and 16, and 32 percent of those who arrived after age 16" (Simon, 2012). The reason this information is important is because it shows people who immigrate to France embed their children with French ideas and culture enough that it becomes a part of their heritage. It shows that

immigrants in France enjoy their roots in the country, and want to continue their lineage as French citizens. Immigration is an aspect of collective identity that identifies a country's acceptance, and the promotion of integration can lie within the immigration policies of a country.

Like France, Germany has shown an upward movement in the general opinion on integration of immigrants, but the rich history of discrimination and the policies that still exist from it are hard to alter, thus making it hard to change opinions. German policy makers have attempted to change these embedded ideals, but their work is in the short term, when in actuality, a long term plan is heavily needed. Migration flows have been low over the past decade in Germany, (Rita, 2009) and this has caused policy makers to focus on other aspects of the country, which is detrimental as the policies made for immigration need to be long lasting and flexible with the tides of migration. Germany has made this mistake before, between 1950 and 1970. They ignored integration policies when there was a huge influx of guest workers immigrating to Germany, causing a greater social inequality for said workers. This ignorance of policy remained active until recently. The quality of immigrants has also never really been on Germany's side throughout its history. The recent swing from Turkish, low-skilled labor workers to European families shows very few high-skilled labor workers, also creating social disparity. This is a big aspect of Germany that differs from France. While there is an influx of third-country nationalists in France, Germany has a very miniscule percentage of their immigrants coming from this category. Students of German heritage are much more likely to follow an education path than immigrant students, as well as immigrants being much more likely

to be unemployed than non-immigrants. Another aspect affecting German immigrant integration is the economy. When the economy is poor in a country, the idea of locking up jobs for citizens is more favorable, and in January 2009, 8.3 percent of Germany's workforce was considered unemployed (Rita, 2009). This is a huge cause for concern because of the lack of policies that support integration. One of the best ways to overcome a deficit is to understand that everyone is needed in a country, and increasing the workload for foreigners is a good way to strengthen the economy. The holes in the collective identity of Germany restrict the contribution of immigrants, and really allows the country to suffer as a result. Compared to France, Germany has marginally lower rates of naturalization, as well as stricter policies on voting, which shows a lack of inclusion in society for foreigners. These aspects, on top of very restricted work visa applications contribute to an aging society, a declining economy, and social inequality throughout Germany.

Along with the recent decline of the Euro, and economies belonging to the European Union declining, the ECB, or European Central Bank has began a process of Quantitative-easing, which mean they will purchase 80 billion Euros worth of bonds from EU countries over the next 18 months to kick-start their economies. This has been met with mixed responses, most being good, yet there are some countries that feel that it is a bit over intrusive and that it will have an adverse effect. Two countries opposing each other on this issue are Greece and Italy. Both countries have their reasoning for their ideas on the policy, and both make good points to support their arguments.

The president of each country have spoken out about the policy, making the outcry very political and important.

The fall of the Euro has created a pressing issue for the ECB, and they have been attempting to determine the best plan of action in fixing its value. The plan they have proposed will attempt to bail out countries in debt buy purchasing a large amount of bonds from each one. Italy's president, Pier Carlo Padoan, has spoken out in support of the plan saying it has “. . . already being successful through a declining euro.” Padoan said a “ weaker euro is in line with the single currency area's long-term economic outlook and will boost Italy's recovery this year” (Rotondi, 2015). Padoan also says that the new plan will increase Italy's GDP by a percent, as the new Euro trend promotes Italian export firms. Italy's past few years of having an on and off declining economy fears that low rates of inflation will lead to high rates of deflation, and the new plan of QE will help reduce the risks of full deflation. One aspect of the plan says that it will increase the budget of Italy's bank, while at the same time not exposing it to any new risks. This is key because when you change such a massive influence of money in an economy, there are usually risks associated with trading with new countries, larger debts, and other economic downfalls. The biggest upside to the QE program for Italy is that it will increase the banks interest in funding private organizations, increasing the value of financial activities.

Greece is an example of a country that opposes the QE implemented by the CBE, and they have a few main arguments as to why they oppose it. As of March, 2015, they were not one of the countries included in the list to buy bonds from. This will change if the bonds they purchased from the ECB

mature by this summer. Internally, Greece is dealing with their own bailout scheme they implemented that restricts their addition to the QE plan. Their biggest argument is that it does not promote private investing, which is what it aims to do. Greece's president, Yanis Varoufakis has openly stated " QE could prove both unsustainable and incapable of boosting private credit growth and investment in productive activities," Varoufakis said. " Imagine an alternative plan to QE where the EIB will take its marching orders to lead an investment-led recovery for Europe. I'd like to call that the Merkel plan." This shows the lack of trust that Greece's government has for the plan, and even though they are currently exempt from it, it also shows their mindset for controlling their own economy for the years to come. It is important for Greece to become a country being bailed out by the ECB because the bank no longer accepts Greek bonds, forcing them to rely on emergency liquid assistance, which is a more expensive and damaging asset. Both countries face strenuous economic conditions, and the plan proposed by the ECB seems to benefit most. Greece has internal issues that they must iron out before being included, but once they do it seems there is room for an upward trend in their economy.

Minority groups attempting to define themselves in European countries is a long lasting fight that has led to many reforms in governments, as well as society itself. One minority group that is good to compare between countries is homosexuals. Homosexuals have been oppressed throughout history, and most European countries are no exception to this. In fact, how forward the Netherlands are in their policies on homosexuality makes them the perfect country to counter against a country with harsher ideals, such as Russia.

Determining a country's collective identity begins with the people, and for a country to have a strong identity, they must recognize all of its people. If certain groups of people cannot be represented, it creates a gap in society, and allows for discrimination. Homosexuality has been an issue that every country has to face, as it is a way of life. Some countries handle it well, and include homosexuals in their identity, while others brush them under the table and hinder their representation.

Russia has for a very long time been considered to have a conservative view on homosexuality. It wasn't until 1999 that being a homosexual was considered a mental illness. This absurd legislation was eventually changed, but the fact that it remained for such a long time is a bit unnerving. The problem stems from a long history of institutionalized discrimination towards the homosexual community. For example, the police in Russia does not keep records of hate crimes towards homosexuals, instead treating them as common crimes. Also, there have been numerous studies showing that in cases involving a homosexual victim, the police have exhibited a lack of interest towards closing the cases, and most of them do not even reach the courts. This disinterest towards homosexual's rights, supports the notion that it is institutionalized, and represents how harsh the treatment of the homosexual community is. Furthermore, the recent rise in radical groups labeling themselves as "social movements" has shown no favorable attitudes towards homosexuals. A group named "Occupy Pedophiles" was created in 2012 to actively seek homosexuals and commit acts of violence towards them. Vigilante groups such as this one are becoming more common in Russia, as groups of people aim to prevent their children, and the

future of the country from being subjected to homosexuality. The most recent issue involving homosexual rights in Russia came to light during the most recent Olympics. Russian legislation passed a law saying it is illegal to hand out homosexual “propaganda” to children, including hosting activist events and rallies. Also included was a law stating that same-sex couples could not adopt children. These are recent, relevant examples showing that Russia has not taken many strides towards equality. There is a large homosexuality community in Russia that is not represented, and fearful to express their views as it puts a target on their backs and removes them from society. It’s not until Russia reviews these laws that there will be a true representation of homosexuals, and until then, the country’s identity is blemished.

The Netherlands on the other hand, has a long history of homosexual acceptance, and welcomes them into the identity created for Dutch society. As the first country in the world to adopt a policy of same-sex marriage, it has long been considered a front runner in not only European acceptance, but across the globe as well. In comparison to Russia, 30% of homosexuals feel some sort of discrimination (EUAFR, 2012). Also, according to the survey, The Netherlands have the highest percentage of population that supports homosexuals living as they wish. With collective identity as the issue, this shows that the people of The Netherlands accept homosexuals into their society, allowing them to be a part of their identity. The greatest aspect of this tolerance is shown in the fact that even though they are considered heavily progressive when it comes to homosexual rights, The Netherlands is still proposing policies that will strengthen relations within

itself and with other countries. This initiative remains constant with their stance on the issue throughout history, and promotes equality for the present and future. According to the LGBT and Gender Equality Policy Plan of the Netherlands 2011 – 2015, one of the main focuses of strengthening homosexual relations involves increasing social awareness. Their two main points of focus are: increasing the rights of same-sex couples and the legal parenthood that comes with it, as well as increasing homosexual equality. The first issue addresses the fact that kids raised in homosexual households should have the same status as those raised in heterosexual ones. This key to developing the future citizens ideas on how identity works in their country. If kids grow up separated from other kids because their parents are homosexual's, it creates alienation which alters identity. The second aspect handles more administrative business of homosexual equality. For example, homosexual men may not donate blood, due to the higher risk of STD's. There are a few countries in Europe that allow this under certain conditions, so the plan will attempt to rewrite the laws for donating blood based upon these countries. Even though this is a small aspect of everyday life, each discriminatory law that is altered is a victory for the homosexual community in Europe.

Democracy is an idea that has been around for years, but is still a work in progress to determine the best way to implement it. Public participation is key to any democracy, as the people of the country in discussion must be involved with the government to be heard. There is no one way to run a democracy, and this is evident when comparing different countries public participation. The UK has a long history of public involvement, and is

showing progression to allow for more. They involve the citizens in many aspects of government, reaching out explicitly to obtain the public opinion on certain issues. Poland, on the other hand faces difficulties in this section because of old policies and failure to reform them. A new constitution is being worked on, but the constraints of the old one prohibit the involvement of the public in creating a new one. One of the basic rights of many countries is public involvement in the government, and this is detrimental to the success of democracy.

The United Kingdom is known for its progressiveness in public involvement, and it serves as a guide for other countries looking to become more democratic. There are, however, some issues that they face when dealing with public involvement. “ One of the biggest problems in UK participation today is that the focus has been on quantity rather than quality. Two common assumptions that many people hold are that ‘ participation is always a good thing’ and that ‘ if we build it they will come’. We often assume that there is a vast untapped reserve of active people who want to get involved.” (Bucharest, 2008). This quote is a good start on determining the UK’s stance on public involvement, as it highlights the common assumptions held in the country, and underlines the issues they face when dealing with it. What the statement, “ quantity over quality” refers to in this sense is that the group of people who influence governmental decisions in the UK is a small one. The ‘ Audit of Political Engagement’ survey for 2007 shows that only “ 12% of the British population could be said to be activists and almost half had not taken part in any form of political activity (in the broadest sense) whatsoever.” (Hansard Society, 2008). This is a problem

because this percentage doesn't represent the UK's people as a whole. Most of this percentage is elderly, white males with an education, and minorities are represented with just a percent. So what causes the lack of interest in policy making and government regulation? There are a few answers to this question. One is a lack of faith from the public that their voices will be heard. This can be stemmed from bad processes in law-making, making the voter feel as though the decisions have already been made before the vote happens. The system in place if run correctly is sound, but most activists will tell you that their opinions are pushed under the rug by politicians who have their own agendas. Another reason why there seems to be a lack of interest from the UK's public toward policy making is a sort of egocentric mindset that many countries have, which is the idea that if a policy doesn't affect someone personally, then they won't deem it important to them and won't get involved. This is a commonality, but what governments like the UK do is try and make the process sought after by more people. Their goal is to increase the percentage of people who vote to become more involved, which will also increase the amount of people who vote in general.