

Immigrant Citizens Survey: ‘How immigrants experience integration’

Transnational survey asks the unheard in the integration debate: The immigrant.

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Brussels, 9 May 2012. The *Immigrant Citizens Survey (ICS)*, piloted by the *King Baudouin Foundation* and the *Migration Policy Group* is the first transnational survey that is directly relevant for policy-makers in many areas of integration at local, national and European level.

“The results are striking. While public debate focuses mostly on the problems of integration and only little on the successes, this survey shows a different picture”, said Francoise Pissart of the **King Baudouin Foundation**.

The results show that

- 3 out of 4 migrants are or wish to become citizens in their country of residence, which in turn helps them feel more settled, obtain better jobs and improve their access to further education;
- immigrants highly value language and integration courses, which for many also enhances socio-economic integration;
- immigrants are as willing as the general public to vote or to join political parties and trade unions; they also wish to see more diversity in politics and are willing to vote for it;
- Family reunification improves family life and increases a sense of belonging.

The Immigrant Citizen Survey of non-EU-born legal immigrants captured the insights of over 7,000 people in 15 cities in 7 countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain). They were asked for their assessment of whether integration policies and programmes are relevant, implemented, used, and have an impact on their own lives.

Focusing on employment, languages, civic and political participation, family reunion, long-term residence and citizenship, key findings point to a great desire to fully participate in the labour market in their countries of residence. One obstacle that migrants may face includes a mistrust of foreign qualifications, leading to almost 1/3 of immigrants surveyed occupying positions they felt **‘over-qualified’** for.

Thomas Huddleston of the **Migration Policy Group** emphasised that *“the Immigrant Citizen Survey results show that policy makes a difference for migrants’ integration experiences. The findings also suggest that there is potential for **investment** in broader integration courses, the recognition of foreign qualifications and political participation policies. How and when these policies are implemented is crucial. **By giving migrants a voice, the ICS adds nuanced depth to the integration policy debate which is often left out.**”*

The full ICS results are available on www.immigrantsurvey.org. The survey was implemented by 19 partner organisations from 8 European countries and co-financed by the European Commission, the King Baudouin Foundation, the Oak Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Immigrant Citizens Survey (ICS)

- This pilot survey was conducted in the end of 2011.
- It aims to make the voice of immigrants large and representative enough to affect the formulation of integration and immigration policies in Europe.
- ICS asked more than 7,000 immigrants in Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain to assess their aspirations and needs and to evaluate how effective integration policies are in meeting them.
- Immigrants as direct beneficiaries were asked questions on key integration areas: integration and language courses, employment, political participation, family reunification, long-term residence, and access to nationality.
- The results will be launched in 2012 in the seven countries, so that advocacy and policymaking organisations can better use the results of polling and consultation among immigrants.
- The timing of this project is strategic for the emerging EU agenda on capturing immigrant perceptions and designing common reference indicators to evaluate integration policy.

This evidence base will:

- Increase knowledge of policy impact and immigrants' experiences.
- Create more impactful policies and services with better integration outcomes for immigrants and diverse societies.

Further use of ICS

Eighteen major European general surveys from the past five years were reviewed and several questions were used in ICS in order to compare the experiences of surveyed immigrants in these cities to the general public in the country.

The survey was carried out from October 2011 to January 2012. In total 7,473 immigrants born outside the EU were surveyed in 15 cities.

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Website for full ICS results: www.immigrantsurvey.org

Notes to the Editor

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About King Baudouin Foundation

The King Baudouin Foundation is an independent public benefit foundation that supports projects and citizens who are committed to create a better society. In this way we can make a lasting contribution towards greater justice, democracy and respect for diversity.

For more please see: www.kbs-frb.be

About MPG

The Migration Policy Group (MPG) is an independent non-profit European organisation committed to contributing to lasting and positive change resulting in open and inclusive societies in which all members have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in developing the economic, social and civic life of Europe's diverse societies.

MPG stimulates well-informed European policy debate, cooperation and action to achieve this goal in three programme areas of Migration & Mobility; Anti-discrimination & Equality; and Diversity & Integration. MPG takes a consistent and dynamic approach to all three inter-related programmes.

For more, please see www.migpolgroup.org