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IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION REGIMES IN EUROPE: INCORPORATING THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

Vesna Lukić, Aleksandar Tomašević

LIBERO, PHOTO: COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRATION, SERBIA

Ensuring timely policy responses to integration is important.

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Immigrant integration regimes in Europe: Incorporating the Western Balkan countries

ABSTRACT: This article discusses immigrant integration policies in Europe. We analyzed data from the 2015 Migration Integration Policy Index to identify similar immigrant integration regimes in Europe according to policy priorities related to immigrants' socioeconomic rights. The results of a latent class analysis demonstrated that there are two immigrant integration policy regimes among the EU 28, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia, with variation between the old EU member states since 1995 (without Greece) and Estonia versus the new EU member states since 2004 (without Estonia), Greece, and the Western Balkan countries. Based on our classification, we conclude that there is a trend of convergence in integration policy regimes in Europe, in which the effects of spatial/geographical and temporal dimensions are manifested.

KEY WORDS: immigration, integration policy, Migrant Integration Policy Index, latent class analysis, Europe

Režimi integracije priseljencev v Evropi: vključevanje držav Zahodnega Balkana

POVZETEK: V članku avtorja obravnavata evropsko politiko vključevanja priseljencev v večinsko družbo. Na podlagi analize podatkov Indeksa politike vključevanja migrantov (MIPEX) za leto 2015 in ob hkratnem upoštevanju prednostnih nalog, ki se nanašajo na družbenogospodarske pravice priseljencev, ugotavljata, kateri režimi vključevanja priseljencev v Evropi so si med seboj podobni. Rezultati analize latentnih razredov so pokazali, da se v 28 državah članicah EU, Albaniji, Bosni in Hercegovini, Črni gori, Severni Makedoniji in Srbiji uporabljata dva režima politike vključevanja priseljencev, pri čemer so opazne razlike med starejšimi državami EU (članicami od leta 1995, a brez Grčije) in Estonijo ter novejšimi članicami (od leta 2004, brez Estonije), Grčijo in državami Zahodnega Balkana. Na podlagi izdelane klasifikacije avtorja ugotavljata, da postajajo evropski režimi integracijske politike med seboj čedalje bolj podobni, navedeno pa ima opazne prostorske oziroma geografske in časovne posledice.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: priseljevanje, integracijska politika, indeks politike vključevanja migrantov, analiza latentnih razredov, Evropa

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1 Introduction

In Europe today, there has been an increasing focus on immigration-related issues by both scholars and policymakers. A literature review suggests that in the academic world much attention has been given to the discussion of immigration and integration policies across countries (Bjerre et al. 2014; de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2015). However, most studies have focused on northwestern Europe, with its long immigration and integration experience, the EU, or OECD countries (Joppke 2007; Garibay and Cuyper 2013; Gregurović and Župarić-Iljić 2018), whereas this topic remains under-researched in the non-EU countries and particularly in the Western Balkans. Therefore, tackling migration and developing immigration and integration policies in European countries that are not immigrant destinations is challenging.

Migration cuts across disciplines, whereas migrants cross geographically and socially constructed borders and boundaries. As Hardwick (2008) and Josipovič and Repolusk (2003) emphasize, it is important to consider the spatial perspective of migration when theorizing about assimilation. The social and political challenges of immigration make immigrant integration a very important policy domain for governments. European countries formulated national immigrant integration policies in the past primarily in countries in northwestern Europe, whereas the institutional framework for migration is relatively new in eastern Europe. Several national models of integration for the countries of northwestern Europe were distinguished in migration literature according to government policy principles and responses to immigration and integration: the assimilationist model, the multicultural model, and the differential exclusionist model (Brubaker 1992; Castles 1995).

These models have been questioned and criticized by researchers for various reasons. Critical discussions suggest that the typology of national immigrant integration models does not recognize the dynamic character of integration policies. It, therefore, under-recognizes the temporality of categories of integration regimes (Meuleman and Reeskens 2008; Finotelli and Michalowski 2012). Entzinger and Biezefeld (2003) emphasize the limitations of focusing on a limited number of dimensions in the most commonly used typologies. Other shortcomings of the typologies refer to the validity of indicators as well as to ignoring the potential immigration-integration policy nexus (Boucher and Gest 2014).

Contemporary Europeanization, as Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) define it, and globalization processes influence migration management (Appave and Laczko 2011). Therefore, efforts toward the Europeanization of integration policies have been evident in the last decade (Parkes 2008). Since 2004, the European Union has been developing the legal framework and principles of a coherent policy for integrating immigrants (Council … 2004, 2008). The documents create a common understanding of integration as a precondition for harmonization of immigrant integration legislation (Martiniello 2006; Lozano et al. 2014). Integration is defined as a »dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States« (Council … 2004). Although the EU supports national policies with policy funds, coordination and exchange of knowledge among the integration policies is a responsibility of EU countries. Previous research has identified the transformation of national integration models and convergence in integration policies and practices across the EU (Joppke 2007; Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2015), as well as convergence in integration models (Doomernik and Bruquetas-Callejo 2015).

Researchers, policymakers, and decision-makers are increasingly preoccupied with immigration and integration policies across countries. Various databases of migration policies and adopted legislation have been created that cover a number of policy fields, countries, and timespans. These databases offer many opportunities to researchers and policymakers for comparative analysis or evaluation of integration policies across countries. The immigrant integration indicators are part of the International Migration Policy and Law Analysis (IMPALA) database (Beine et al. 2016) tracking immigration policies. They are also part of the Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG) database tracking migration policy changes (de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2018). The Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG) have produced the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). This index covers thirty-eight countries and eight policy areas (labor market, family reunion, education, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination, and health) relevant for immigrant integration for 2004–2014 (Huddleston et al. 2015). The data are limited to EU countries, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States. Data for the Western Balkans are not included. The MIPEX data are available for Bosnia and Herzegovina, North

Macedonia, and Serbia (2013 and 2015), whereas Albania and Montenegro were assessed only in 2015. In the Western Balkan countries, immigration and integration issues are relatively new.

Scholars interested in comparing policies for integrating immigrants across countries and classification of integration regimes (Meuleman and Reeskens 2008; Zamfir et al. 2014) frequently refer to MIPEX data. Some researchers combine these data with other indicators; Gregurović and Župarić-Iljić (2018) used the MIPEX overall index together with the OECD indicators of integration. Recently scholars have linked integration policy models with other social phenomena such as the political participation of immigrants (Helbling et al. 2016) or perceptions of economic and cultural threats (Callens and Meuleman 2016). However, only the EU countries were studied.

Considering the diversity of European societies, there is a need to study and analyze integration models of countries that have not been studied so far. This is particularly important for countries that according to Melegh et al. (2014) are still characterized by major emigration flows and could transform into »countries of immigration.« There is also a need to enhance the understanding of different typologies of integration regimes that represent the integration of immigrants.

Understanding the concept of integration of immigrants is very important given its complex nature involving multiple processes. There is an increasing number of thoughts about alternative approaches to the concept of integration (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillmore 2018) due to the era of super-diversity as a new demographic reality (Vertovec 2007). However, regarding the data referred to in this article, immigrant integration is understood as an opportunity for gaining equal socio-economic rights.

This article identifies similar clusters of immigrant integration regimes in Europe according to policy priorities related to immigrants' socioeconomic rights. Based on the research gap identified in previous literature, this article answers two main research questions. First, it examines how many different types of integration regimes can be distinguished in Europe when the Western Balkan countries are taken into account. Second, it looks at what the differences are between clusters of immigrant integration regimes and which ones do better in integrating migrants based on the policy areas discussed.

2 Data and methods

The data used in this paper are from the 2015 Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) database for thirty-three countries, collected in 2014. The index represents the integration policy by the indicators based on qualitative expert evaluation of existing national laws and policies. The MIPEX database covers eight policy areas relevant to the integration of immigrants. Every policy area presents diverse components and policy dimensions that are related to policy indicators. Thus, the policy area scores are based on the average scores of policy dimensions that favor the integration of immigrants (Huddleston 2016).

The aim of our analysis was the construction of an exclusive and exhaustive typology of integration policy regimes among the EU 28, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Because the integration regime is represented by eight categorical policy indicators, our analysis requires a model that will reveal the latent classification of these regimes into clusters based on similar patterns of values for each indicator. In other words, this model would reveal a discrete latent variable that will indicate the membership of each country in one of the regime types in such a manner that countries belonging to different types will exhibit substantial differences in the majority of MIPEX indicators. This model was constructed using polytomous latent class analysis, which estimates the conditional probability of each country belonging to one of the different regimes (latent classes) given the values of polytomous categorical variables based on the MIPEX indicators. This procedure requires the specification of the number of classes, and so the analysis proceeds by estimating several models, whereby each model has one class more than the previous one. The maximum number of estimated classes depends on the number of countries analyzed (sample size), the total number of variables observed, and the number of levels of categorical variables observed. The model with the best fit to the empirical data was chosen as the most suitable typology. This also means that the model output results in a conditional probability distribution in which for each country there is a high probability of membership in one of the classes and a low probability of membership in any other class, which satisfies our goal of creating a typology that is straightforward and exclusive.

Our analysis included data that consist of scores for eight policy areas on migrant integration, with thirty-three observations for each policy area. For each policy area score, the minimum value is 0 and the

maximum is 100, with each value being one categorical level of policy area variable. Therefore, given the sample size, the reduction of categories (data recoding) was necessary in order to perform polytomous latent class analysis. We reduced the number of categories of each policy area to three so that the new values are as follows: 1 if the original value of the score was less than the first tercile, 2 if the original value of the score was between the first and second tercile, and 3 if the original value of the score was higher than the second tercile, as shown in Table 1.

The analysis was performed using *R* statistical software and the *poLCA* package (Drew and Lewis 2011).

3 Results

As noted above, the total number of estimated parameters in the latent class model is a function of the number of variables, the number of categories for each variable, and the number of latent classes specified by the model.

A model that consists of seven policy areas, three categories for each policy area, and two latent classes has twenty-nine estimated parameters. Given our sample size of thirty-three, the model with eight policy areas could handle only one class, which is not suitable for our research goals (for a further reference

Table 1: Policy area indicator values for thirty-three European countries.

Country	I1 (labor market)	I2 (family reunion)	I3 (education)	I4 (political participation)	I5 (permanent residence)	I6 (access to nationality)	I7 (anti-discrimination)	I8 (health)
Albania	2	3	1	2	2	3	2	3
Austria	3	1	3	2	2	1	1	3
Belgium	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2
Bulgaria	2	2	1	1	3	1	3	2
Croatia	2	3	1	1	3	1	2	3
Cyprus	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
Czech Republic	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	3
Denmark	3	1	3	3	3	2	1	2
Estonia	3	3	3	2	3	1	1	1
Finland	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
France	2	1	2	3	1	3	3	2
Germany	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	2
Greece	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	3
Hungary	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	3
Ireland	1	1	2	3	1	3	2	2
Italy	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	1
Latvia	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Lithuania	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Luxembourg	1	2	3	3	2	3	1	3
Malta	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
Montenegro	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	2
Netherlands	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
North Macedonia	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	2
Poland	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	1
Portugal	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Romania	2	3	1	1	2	1	3	3
Serbia	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3
Slovakia	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Slovenia	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
Spain	3	3	2	3	3	2	1	3
Sweden	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
United Kingdom	2	1	3	2	1	3	3	3

regarding the relationship between model parameters, number of classes, sample size, and degrees of freedom in a latent class model, see Hagenaars and McCutcheon 2002). Therefore, we decided to exclude the data for the policy area health, which was most recently included in the MIPEX database (in 2015). With seven remaining policy areas (I1–I7), the model can be estimated for one or two classes, but not for three or more. We constructed two models: Model A with seven policy areas, three categories per policy area and one class; and Model B with seven policy areas, three categories per policy area, and two classes in order for classes to encompass different integration regimes of countries.

Given the data restrictions imposed on the estimated models, our analysis focused on the distinction between Model A, which classifies all countries into the same type, therefore disregarding the concept of different integration regime types, and Model B, which classifies countries into two different integration regime types.

As shown in Table 2, Model B (two classes) has lower values for both AIC (the Akaike Information Criterion) and BIC (the Bayesian Information Criterion), and also higher relative entropy, and so it has

Table 2: Model comparison.

Model	Number of classes	Degrees of freedom	Number of estimated parameters	Log-likelihood	Akaike Information Criterion	Bayesian Information Criterion	Relative entropy
A	1	19	14	−253.33	534.64	555.60	0.8804
B	2	4	33	−221.8322	501.66	545.06	0.8953

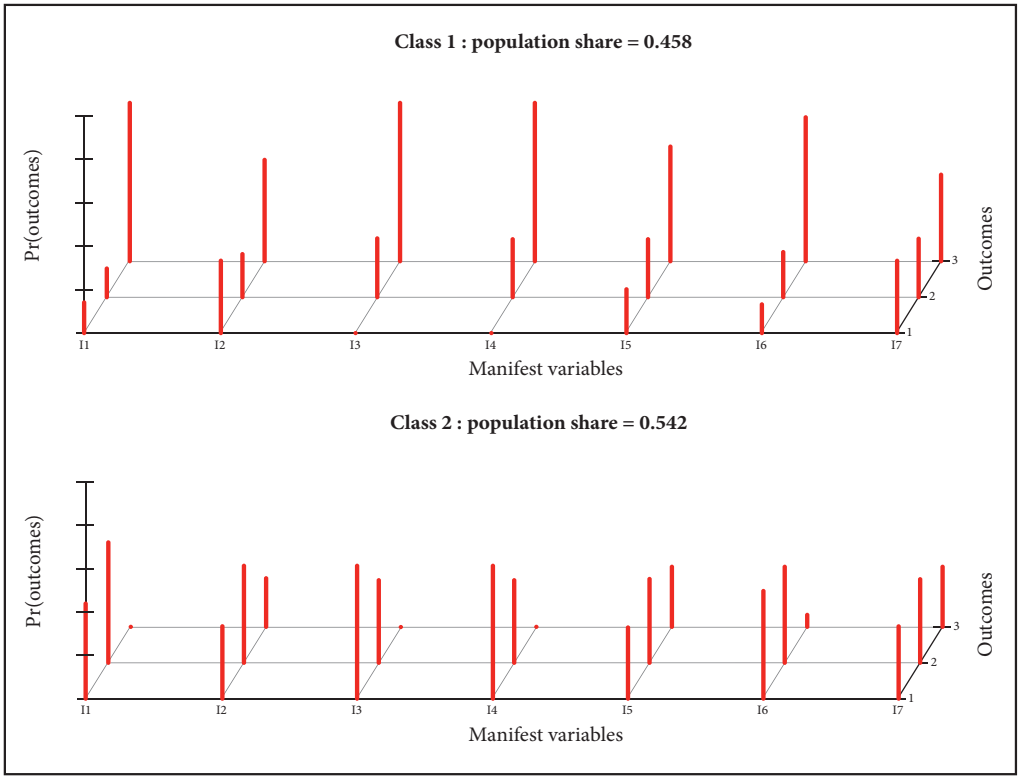

Figure 1: Conditional probabilities of outcomes given class membership (Model B). Note: I1 = labor market, I2 = family reunion, I3 = education, I4 = political participation, I5 = permanent residence, I6 = access to nationality, I7 = anti-discrimination

a better fit to empirical data and the distribution of policy area score values compared to the model with one class (Nylund, Asparouhov and Muthén 2007). In other words, the classification of countries into two classes has a higher fit than the classification of all countries into one class.

The results of the latent class analysis (Figure 1) show that for Model B 45.8% of the countries analyzed belong to Class 1, and 54.2% of countries belong to Class 2. In Model B, Class 2 includes countries for which the distribution of the outcomes of the variables (policy areas) has a high probability of each of the seven variables (policy areas) having the lowest or median score (1 or 2), and a very small probability of them having the highest score (3). There are higher probabilities for the countries grouped in Class 2 to have the highest value for variables I2, I5, and I7 (family reunion, permanent residence, and anti-discrimination), whereas for the others the countries from this class do not have the highest value. On the other hand, countries belonging to Class 1 have high probabilities of each variable's value being the highest one. In summary, Class 2 consists of the countries where one can expect low or medium levels of integration policy in the majority of areas, whereas Class 1 contains countries for which one can expect the highest scores for integration policy. The most striking differences between the two classes are in regard to areas I1, I3, I4, and I6 (labor market, education, political participation, and access to nationality), and these policy areas may serve as clear demarcation lines between countries belonging to the highest tier of integration standards and others.

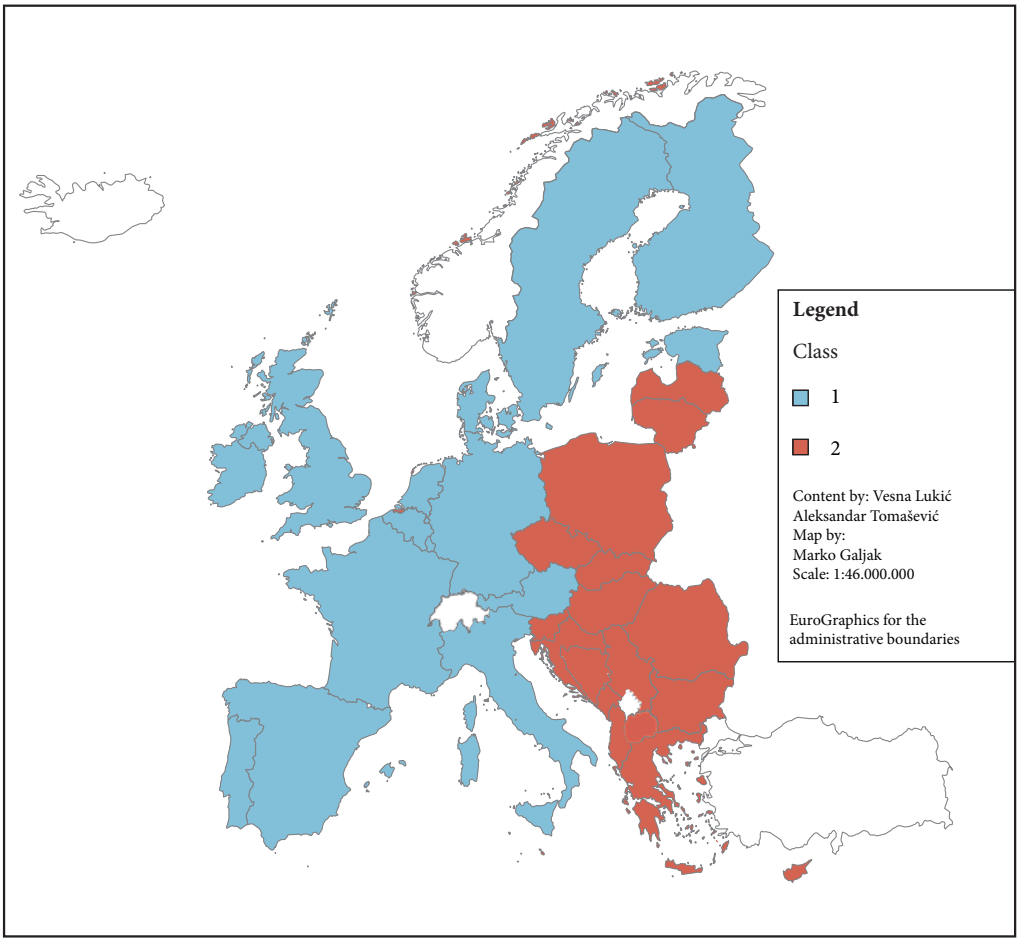

Figure 2: Integration regimes according to latent class prevalence membership for the EU 28 and Western Balkan countries.

Table 3: The latent class membership for EU 28 and Western Balkan countries.

Class 1	Class 2
Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom	Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia

In terms of latent class prevalence membership (Table 3), we identified two different types of integration regimes in Europe when the Western Balkan countries are included. Class 1 includes EU countries since 1995 (the EU 15) without Greece and with Estonia, and Class 2 includes EU countries since 2004 (EU 13) with Greece and without Estonia but with the Western Balkan countries. As shown in Figure 2, a clear pattern of class division across Europe can be seen.

We find high probabilities for the countries in Class 2 of having achieved high standards regarding immigrants' equal rights and opportunities in the areas of family reunion, permanent residence, and anti-discrimination (I2, I5, and I7). However, the EU 13 (with the exception of Estonia) and the Western Balkan countries will need to make further efforts in developing integration policies in other areas relevant for integration of immigrants in the host society such as the labor market (I1), education (I3), political participation (I4), and access to nationality (I6). According to Huddleston (2016), political participation is seen as an area of weakness for integration policy in all Western Balkan countries and most new countries of immigration, such as the Czech Republic and Greece. The highest probability for the EU 13 (except Estonia) and the Western Balkan countries for achieving standards of integration equivalent to those in the EU 15 countries is in anti-discrimination (I7). The differences between the two classes of immigrant integration regimes point to convergence in integration policies and practices in Europe. The new EU member states and Western Balkan countries need more time to create and implement laws and polices in order to achieve comprehensive high standards defined by the EU regarding immigrants' equal rights and opportunities.

4 Discussion

The validity of traditional national models of integration is currently being questioned and reviewed due to the transformation of national integration policies affected by the process of Europeanization and diverse recent migration challenges (Joppke 2007; Choquet 2017). Calling for more international and comparative migration research (Bommes and Thränhardt 2010) considers paradigms of migration research to be »national paradigms« shaped with states' reactions toward international migration and its social effects identified in national models. In this sense, Pajnik (2007) advocates thinking of migration from a transnational citizenship perspective.

Various immigration experiences of countries, the share of immigrants in the national population, and diverse international migration patterns are reflected in policies and measures of importance for integrating immigrants. The comparison and evaluation of different countries' migration policies make it possible to monitor the best integration practices. Based on the overall score on the 2015 MIPEX Index without health (index value 45) for the Western Balkan countries, immigrant integration policies in those countries are barely halfway favorable for social integration (Huddleston 2016). Although this value is in line with the MIPEX index value (42) for the new EU member states (2004–2013), there is room for improvement compared to the EU 15 countries (61), which do better in providing rights that may produce better integration outcomes. Our results point to two classes of integration regimes for the EU 28 and Western Balkan countries, with a clear distinction between the EU 15 countries on one hand and the EU 13 and Western Balkan countries on the other. The exceptions are Greece and Estonia, which, regarding their EU membership group, do worse and better in the governance of integrating immigrants, respectively. Lower scores in some policy areas in Greece in comparison to Estonia show that targeted support in Greece is missing. Limited funds for integration are not in line with a large number of asylum seekers and illegal arrivals of immigrants. Looking at targeted support in education and the labor market, there is more responsiveness to immigrants' specific needs in Estonia, which has a small number of immigrants per year (Huddleston et al. 2015). High

standards in anti-discrimination in Greece (Huddleston et al. 2015) are in line with the probability values of the class it belongs to.

The Western Balkan countries are continuously harmonizing their legislation relevant to migration with EU standards. However, according to the MIPEX report for the countries of the Western Balkan (Huddleston 2016), indicators of targeted support for immigrants in the labor market and in education express that those measures are completely nonexistent. There are no proper immigrant integration policies for immigrants' participation in political life, consultative bodies, and implementation policies. Nevertheless, customizing different services for a small number of immigrants is not easily feasible. Likewise, the creation of targeted measures to support the integration of immigrants in certain sectors, such as the labor market, education, or political participation, depends on the financial capacity of the state and additional funds for these purposes. For EU member states, financial resources for integration measures are available through EU funds, whereas other countries face more challenges in this regard. Doomernik and Bruquetas-Callejo (2015) point out that integration measures in central Europe largely depend on EU funds.

Comparing our classification with the results obtained by Meuleman and Reeskens (2008) as well as with the results obtained by Zamfir et al. (2014) for twenty-seven EU countries, based on the 2007 and 2010 MIPEX data, respectively, we find that the outcomes are not consistent when the Western Balkan countries are incorporated into the classification of integration regimes. An important difference is that, based on the same policy areas – except for Meuleman and Reeskens (2008), who did not cover education – Meuleman and Reeskens (2008) and Zamfir et al. (2014) classified integration regimes into one class more (i.e., three). Latent Class 2 from our analysis is similar to latent Class 2 of Meuleman and Reeskens (2008), which encompassed all eastern European countries plus Austria, Denmark, Greece, and Malta, which were considered to have exclusionist integration policies, characterized by difficult access to nationality and political participation. In this regard, Denmark has made significant progress since 2007, whereas progress in integration policy in Austria is related to labor market mobility as the major political priority for new integration policies (Huddleston et al. 2015). In our classification, based on the 2014 MIPEX data, Austria and Denmark are in Class 1, pointing to the improved legal environment of immigrant integration. According to our research findings, differences and inequalities in the governance of immigrant integration between the old and the new EU member states are more visible when a broader territory is covered.

In the course of the analysis of the MIPEX data, as Lukić (2018) points out, it should be borne in mind that these data point only to the legal and political framework of immigrant integration, and not to more complex integration policy implementation and effectiveness. According to Czaika and de Haas (2013), the complexity of perception of the effectiveness of immigration policies might be the outcome of the unclear boundary between migration/integration policy as well as between migration policy and other public policies. Indeed, the intertwining of different areas within the institutional framework significantly affects the integration of immigrants. Given the diverse integration experience and immigration patterns between countries, the appropriateness of comparing integration policies through MIPEX has recently been questioned (Gregurović and Župarić-Iljić 2018). Nonetheless, MIPEX is the most comprehensive database and the most widely used tool for measuring immigrant integration policies.

5 Conclusion

This article examined immigrant integration regimes in Europe according to policy priorities related to immigrants' socioeconomic rights. A latent class analysis showed that a model with two classes has a better fit to the MIPEX data than a baseline model in which no distinction between classes is made. Due to the data and method limitations, no further models could be tested.

The results of the latent class analysis demonstrate that two distinct types of integration regimes can be distinguished across the EU 28 and the Western Balkan countries. There are clear differences between the EU 15 group of countries versus the EU 13 and Western Balkan countries group regarding integration regimes. The countries in the first group have achieved high standards in policy areas relevant to integrating immigrants. Furthermore, in the Western European countries variations in immigrant integration-related legislation and policy instruments produced by historical and national contexts are decreasing. The countries from the more numerous second group are lagging in developing integration policies and targeted measures for supporting the integration of immigrants. This is in line with the long-term process of integrating

immigrants into the countries' societies, whereas creating targeted measures for supporting the integration of immigrants is not easy to achieve in countries with a small number of immigrants and limited financial means.

Continued comparative analysis of national policies toward the integration of immigrants can shed light on how particular countries manage to incorporate immigrants in various social spheres while making changes in those policies at the same time. The outcomes provide inputs for policies aiming at best practices in immigrant integration. Monitoring differences within a broader geographical and social setting makes it possible to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of integration regimes. The main conclusion is that there is convergence in integration regimes where the temporal dimension of migration policy development and the geographical dimension are visible.

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