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Migration Studies Unit
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street London WC2A 2AE

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Changing integration policy towards third-country nationals in the European Union: Language and knowledge of society tests in the Member States

Daniel Bagameri



Abstract¹

Integration policy, in its original liberal sense, aims to provide immigrants with opportunities to acquire full rights and ability to participate in a society without demanding assimilation into the mainstream culture. However, a new approach with a more obligatory character has recently been emerging in Europe. For third-country nationals, the acquisition of legal statuses in relation to family reunification, long-term residence, and naturalisation is increasingly being made conditional upon the fulfilment of language and/or knowledge of the society tests. Yet existing research lacks an EU-wide systematic analysis of which integration conditions have been put into place. This paper aims to address part of this gap by providing data on and comparing some of the most important features of these requirements across the 27 Member States. The data reveals the incidence and the nature of integration conditions now applied throughout the European Union, and I show that liberal concepts of integration are indeed widely being transformed in a restrictive direction and into instruments of migration control.

Keywords: civic test, European Union, family reunification, immigration, integration, language test, long-term residence, migration control, naturalisation, third-country nationals.

Introduction

Integration policy, in its original liberal sense, aims to provide immigrants with opportunities to acquire full rights and fully participate in a society without being forced to assimilate into the mainstream culture (de Groot, Kuipers & Weber 2009, p. 52). Therefore, integration is the result of the migrant's own agency, which implies that it has to be a two-way process, in which not just the migrant but the receiving society, too, has to adapt. In other words, integration is defined as a contractual agreement between the migrant and the host society, from which a number of obligations follow. Migrants must be loyal and respectful of the values, culture, and traditions of the host society. In turn, the host society will authorise their residence, endow them with protection against arbitrary expulsion, and facilitate their involvement in the socio-economic and cultural spheres.

Lately, however, a different approach to integration has been emerging, which has largely departed from this original meaning.² The emphasis has now shifted to the migrant,

¹ Daniel Bagameri holds an MA in International Relations from Eotvos Lorand University (Budapest) and an MA in European Studies from Central European University (Budapest). He is assisting in research for Center for EU Enlargement Studies. His research interests lie in the areas of European migration issues, cross-border regional cooperation within the EU, interest representation within the EU, as well as EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy.

² This mutation of the traditional understanding of integration can be observed in EU law as well (Kostakopoulou, Carrera & Jesse 2009).

who has the responsibility to integrate, rather to assimilate, into the mainstream culture, and to prove his commitment to the host society. The other side of the process, i.e. host societies have to be supportive of settlement and adaptive to the presence of newcomers, has been forgotten, thereby rendering integration a unidirectional practice. The novelty of the new approach is, therefore, its obligatory character which builds upon the presumption that deficits on the part of migrants do exist. These must be overcome through learning the language, history, civic traditions, and culture of the host state (Kostakopoulou 2010, p. 7). As a result, most European states lay out only in two requirements what they expect of their immigrants in terms of integration: familiarity with the official language of the receiving society and respect of the liberal democratic values, procedures, and the common heritage of the nation in which they wish to live (Joppke 2005).

This study focuses on these requirements' practical implementation, the so-called integration tests, which are exams that non-nationals applying for certain legal statuses have to pass in order to obtain the requested status. These assessments may take the form of language or knowledge of the host society exam or both. Joppke (2007a) argues that these integration conditions demonstrate well the transmutation of the notional 'integration' policy into a tool of migration control. Integration tests are used to keep the number of immigrants under control (through the level of requirements, the fee of test-taking or the availability of preparation materials) and to select incoming people (through, for example, the exemption grounds). Joppke (2009) has no doubt about the target population of civic integration: Muslims.

Most Member States have applied a language or integration condition for naturalisation for already more than fifty years. The examination as to whether an application met this requirement used to be conducted through a personal interview with a municipal civil servant or a local representative of the state. This used to be the dominant means for checking whether an immigrant with the required residence, income and clean criminal record had sufficiently integrated into society in order to acquire full legal membership as well. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century these tests have been formalised. The application of integration conditions is not only getting widespread, but also a convergence trend of the integration conditions has been taking place within the EU. They are now practiced at an earlier stage in the migratory process and the level of knowledge required has also been raised considerably. Finally, the tests are no longer administered by the state but through private companies.

Since formalised integration tests have appeared only recently, this research field is still quickly developing. As far as I know, only three books have been published so far dealing with the new integration policy in the EU: Guild, Groenendijk and Carrera (2009); Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson (2009); and van Oers, Ersbøll and Kostakopoulou (2010). These also contain valuable case studies on some Member States' integration conditions, but the only large-scale comparative analysis has been carried out by the "*The INTEC project - Integration and naturalisation tests: the new way to European Citizenship*" (Strik et al. 2010).³ However, the scope of this project was also limited to the investigation of nine Member States. The findings of the recent literature thus seem to be very limited focusing almost exclusively on West European continental countries and the UK.⁴ Therefore, there is a lack of systematic analysis of at least two other major groups of European countries: the Nordic and the Eastern states.

This study aims to compare some of the most important features of these conditions across the 27 Member States and thereby provide a wider context for future detailed studies of single cases. This research gives insights about to what extent West European trends in integration policies are identical in other parts of Europe. This broader analytical view permits a more valid generalization at the European level and makes visible the differences between the Member States. I show that there are important common characteristics of the integration conditions applied in the Member States.

The paper, drawing on the collected data, compares both language and civic knowledge tests along several important dimensions. The required level of knowledge, the governmental justifications for introducing integration requirements, the amount of the fee charged for test-taking, the availability and price of preparatory materials and courses, the list of those who are exempted from test-taking, and the sanctions applied if the applicant fails to fulfil the integration conditions are all going to be overviewed in the practices of the 27 Member States of the EU.⁵ This investigation will be conducted with the purpose of mapping the incidence and the nature of integration conditions applied across the EU.

³ The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX 2011) compares all 27 Member States' integration requirements across the three legal statuses by working with, amongst many others, indicators that are similar to some of the dimensions I use. However, the data of this study has two major differences. First, the index is a quantitative score whereas I bring to light qualitative content aspects of the integration conditions. The quantitative coding system of MIPEX allows us only to investigate the incidence of certain features across the Member States. Second, my data complements MIPEX's by adding new dimensions to the scope of comparison: the imposed sanctions for failing the tests, the year of the introduction of integration conditions, and the governmental justifications for introducing the new requirements.

⁴ Latvia and Hungary are, however, included in the *INTEC project*.

⁵ Most importantly, the actual content of the exam questions is beyond the scope of this paper.

The research's scope is limited in three important respects. First, only those integration requirements are under investigation which have been set for the applications of family reunification, long-term residence permit, and citizenship acquisition by naturalisation. Those that are in force for other legal statuses (for example visas for study purposes which contain language requirements for a long time) are not examined. These three legal categories have been selected because they represent linear stages in immigrants' life (entry, long-term stay, and citizenship) and therefore give some insights about the states' policy whether integration requirements should get gradually higher for each status as the non-national spend more time in the host society. Moreover, these three legal statuses are the most frequently requested by and given to non-nationals in EU Member States. Second, only integration conditions, requirements that must be fulfilled in order to be granted a respective legal status, are examined. Measures, such as integration programmes implemented by the states after the foreigner has been admitted, are not studied. Third, this study is dedicated to third-country nationals (TCNs), i.e. those without the citizenship of a Member State, and therefore EU nationals are beyond the analysis.⁶

Method and Data

A wide range of data was collected and processed to compare integration conditions across all 27 Member States. In the first place, I used primary sources for data collection: most importantly, relevant national authorities' websites, official handbooks or exam and learning materials. Although most of the materials were available in English, in the absence of information, I referred to documents written in the original language. In doing so, I relied on the assistance of my native speaker friends who kindly helped to find relevant sources and translate them. However, the lack of data about national integration conditions put additional limitations on the investigation. Certain countries provide only minimal information on their requirements, which not only reduces the scope of this research, but, and more importantly, also makes the life of the applicants of respective statuses difficult. Therefore, the lack of data means low transparency and little help for TCNs, which can be used as an aspect of criticism in further analyses. The precise references to the data sources are provided in the overview tables. In addition, this study also relies on available secondary sources which are, chiefly,

⁶ Family reunification and long-term residence permit are not applicable to EU citizens. However, naturalisation conditions are mandatory for TCNs and EU citizens as well.

case studies and country reports. Strik et al. (2010) is the fundamental source for the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. For other states, the individual fact sheets of each country provided by the Migrant Service Centres (n.d.) and the country reports of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are frequently used. For the integration conditions set for naturalisation, the country profiles of the European Union Democracy Observatory on Citizenship (n.d.) are the most important secondary sources. The collected data are contrasted and systematized in three sets of tables which contain necessary simplifications (particularly, in the cases of exam fees or exemption grounds).

Overview of the Integration Conditions of EU Member States

This section carries out the comparative analysis of integration conditions with a view to identify the emerging trends of the Member States' practices. The application of integration conditions is, as already mentioned, examined in the case of the following three specific legal categories, which provide TCNs with a secure status in their new home: family reunification, long-term residence permit, and citizenship acquisition by naturalisation. It is important to note that in the absence of EU/international regulations on integration requirements, national laws rule over the three domains under investigation. This legal situation provides Member States with a wide margin of appreciation when defining the conditionality of integration.

Family Reunification

6 out of the 27 Member States make the issue of the relevant legal document for the purpose of family reunification conditional upon the fulfilment of integration requirements. The example set by the Netherlands in 2006 has been followed by France since 2008, by Germany since 2008, by Denmark since 2010, by the United Kingdom since 2010, and lately by Austria since 2011. These countries' integration conditions are compared in Table 1.

There are some points that need highlighting from Table 1's rich data. First, during the national law-making procedures, references to the allegedly successful Dutch practice were often made for justifying the introduction of integration requirements. Second, with the

important exception of Denmark, all countries require the respective exam or exams to be taken while the applicant is still in his or her country of origin. Third, a very similar list of exemption grounds has been adopted in the Member States. Refugees and the mentally disabled (except in the Netherlands) are usually not obliged to sit exams. Generally speaking, the states under examination benefit friendly, Western countries and disregard important conditions that may make passing the test very difficult or even impossible, e.g. illiteracy or pregnancy (Strik et al. 2010, p. 19).

Table 1. Integration Conditions for Family Reunification⁷

| Country | Form of the test | Year of entry into force | Exemption | Preparation | Fee of test-taking |
|----------------|--|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Austria | language test (A1, oral and written) in the country of origin | 2011 | | | |
| Denmark | language (A2, oral) and societal knowledge exam in Denmark | A1-minus: 2010. A2: 2011 | 1. Spouses of migrants with a residence permit granted for occupational or educational reasons. 2. previously stayed in Denmark for at least 5 years and fulfils the Danish language requirement for permanent residence. 3. the sponsor is a refugee. 4. serious illness or disability. | a free and downloadable preparatory package, and language courses | 400 EUR. Re-take: the fee must be paid again (Ersbøll & Gravesen 2010, p. 19) |
| France | language (A1.1, oral and written) and values of French society test in the country of origin. If knowledge is insufficient: signing integration contract and attending a course. | 2008 (Pascouau 2010, p. 177) | 1. at least three years of secondary studies in a French school abroad or at least one year of college in France 2. war, a natural or technical disaster in the home country 3. physical or financial difficulties. (Pascouau 2010, p. 160) | | The test and formation sessions are free of charge. |

⁷ This table extensively relies on the data presented in Strik et al. (2010, pp. 11-31).

| Country | Form of the test | Year of entry into force | Exemption | Preparation | Fee of test-taking |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Germany | language test (A1, oral and written) in the country of origin | 2008 | 1. citizens of USA, Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino, Honduras, Brazil, and El Salvador 2. spouses of the nationals who may enter Germany without a visa. 3. highly skilled migrants. 4. sponsor is a refugee. 5. employees of an international company who are based in Germany for no longer than three years, and their spouses 5. physical or mental disability | language courses of the Goethe Institute | maybe: a reduced fee or exempted from the test fee. If no, course fee: 490 EUR, test fee: 60 EUR. |
| Netherlands | language (A1, oral) and society test in the country of origin | A1-minus: 2006; A1: 2011 | 1. nationals EU/EEA or any other country who do not require a provisional residence permit 2. nationals of Suriname with completed primary education in Dutch 3. those who intend to stay in the Netherlands on a temporary basis 4. sponsor is a refugee. (Ministerie van VROM 2009, p. 17) | undisclosed exam questions. A self-study pack costing €110. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.) | 350 EUR (Besselink 2009, p. 245) |
| UK | language (A1, oral) test in the country of origin | 2010 | 1. from 16 countries with a majority English-speaking population 2. migrants who received a bachelor's degree taught in English 3. a physical or mental condition 4. exceptional compassionate circumstances. (UK Border Agency 2011) | no course is offered | 644 GBP. But it varies largely. |

| Country | Sanction for fail | Justification for Introducing the Condition |
|----------------|---|--|
| Austria | No entry | To reduce the number of spouses coming from outside the EU. Reference to the practice of the Netherlands |
| Denmark | If an applicant has not passed the test within the three-month time limit, a date of departure will be fixed. | To strengthen the individual foreigner's possibilities for successful and rapid integration. To help in securing that foreigners at the outset took responsibility for their own integration and proved their motivation and wish to become part of Danish society. Immigrants must be familiar with Danish norms, values and fundamental rights, including democratic principles, individual freedom, personal integrity, gender equality, freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Furthermore, immigrants must be familiar with certain more practical facts such as the prohibition of female circumcision, forced marriages and the fact that parents are responsible for their children, education, health, work, etc. (Ersbøll 2010b, pp. 128, 130) |
| France | failing the test only delays the family reunification for two month at most. In those cases where the contractual conditions (signed in France) are not respected either by the TCN or her/his spouse, they may be penalised with a financial sanction consisting of the cessation of family social benefits granted by the French state, administrative sanctions consisting of a refusal to renew or to grant the residence permit, and eventual expulsion from the country. (Carrera 2009, p. 332) | The number of TCNs admitted for family reunification was considered too high in comparison with the numbers of immigrants admitted for employment or study. Integration abroad was not dedicated to the enhancement of integration of TCNs but to better manage migration flows. Reference to the Netherlands. (Carrera 2009, p. 331; Carrera & Wiesbrock 2009, p. 14; Pascouau 2010, p. 177) |

| Country | Sanction for fail | Justification for Introducing the Condition |
|-------------|---|---|
| Germany | no entry | Purposes: (1) to promote integration, (2) to provide protection from forced marriages and violations of human rights, and (3) to protect the social welfare state. Reference to the Netherlands. (Michalowski 2010, p. 204) |
| Netherlands | no entry (Besselink 2009, p. 245; Ministerie van VROM 2009, p. 5) | To put an end to the 'process of marginalisation' of immigrants by starting the integration process prior to departure. To render the integration process of newcomers in the Netherlands more efficient and effective. To facilitate the individual responsibility of the potential newcomers and their partners. To stimulate potential immigrants to carefully consider whether it is worth applying for admission to the Netherlands. To reduce the number of family migrants. (Carrera & Wiesbrock 2009, pp. 12-3) |
| UK | | To improve the integration of the spouses/partners into the community and their employment prospects. (UK Border Agency n.d.a) |

Long-term Residence Permit

14 (and the Flemish Regions) out of the 27 Member States set integration conditions for the issue of long-term residence permit. In addition, Greece has adopted legislation introducing both language and knowledge of society requirements, but the implementing act is still on the table of an advisory committee, which renders the application of the integration tests pending (IOM 2008, p. 267). All 14 Member States require a language test, while only 6 of them demand appropriate knowledge about the respective host society too. Civic test does not occur without language skills assessment. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania represent the lately-accessed countries by taking up one-third of all the Member States and the Flemish Regions who have integration conditions in force. None of these states demand knowledge of the society tested. Mandatory integration programmes are in operation in the Flemish Regions and in 5 Member States.⁸ Table 2 compares the integration requirements of this legal status.

In comparison to the integration conditions set for family reunification, similar exemption grounds and the model role of the Netherlands can be observed here as well. It should also be noted that all the Member States, with the sole exception of France, that set integration requirements for family migrants compel a higher level of language knowledge in the case of a long-term resident permit. Austria and the Netherlands adopted one grade higher level of skills, while the UK and Denmark have a 2-grade higher language requirement (or, in Denmark, only one grade higher in the case of proven B1 English proficiency).

⁸ The Flemish Regions do not apply tests, only an integration programme.

Table 2. Integration Conditions for Long-Term Residence Permit⁹

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Are they (also) required to attend an integration programme or course? | Year of entry into force |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Austria | Yes (A2, oral and written) (European Commission 2007) | No | Formally, no | 2003 A1 level; 2005: A2. (European Commission 2007) |
| Belgium | No | No | Yes, but only in the Flemish Regions (language, knowledge of society, career guidance) | 2003 |
| Czech Republic | Yes (A1, written and oral) (IOM 2011b, p. 13) | No (IOM 2011b, p. 13) | No | 2008 (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2009, p. 23) |
| Denmark | Yes (B1, or A2 Danish + B1 English) | Yes (New to Denmark 2011) | Yes (integration contract) | introduction programme: 1999; language test: 2002; 'integration contracts': 2007; 'declarations on integration and active citizenship': 2007; 'active citizenship' requirement: 2011 (Ersbøll 2010b, pp. 113-4) |
| Estonia | Yes (B1) (Estonian Police 2011) | No | No | |
| France | Yes (A1.1, oral and written) | No | Yes (civic training, if necessary language course) | 2007 |

⁹ This table relies on the data presented in Strik et al. (2010, pp. 51-65).

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Are they (also) required to attend an integration programme or course? | Year of entry into force |
|--------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Germany | Yes (B1) | Yes ("basic knowledge of the legal and social order and the way of life in Germany") (IOM 2011d, p. 15) | Yes (orientation course) | integration courses: 2005; the current language examination: 2009; the examination currently in use at the end of the orientation course: 2009. (Michalowski 2010, p. 194) |
| Greece | Yes ("adequate knowledge") (IOM 2008, p. 267; 2011e) | Yes ("knowledge of elements of Greek history and Greek civilization") | | pending |
| Italy | Yes (Ministero dell' Interno n.d.) | No | | 2010 (Ministero dell' Interno n.d.) |
| Latvia | Yes (A2, oral and written) (IOM 2011h, p. 6) | No | No | 2006 |
| Lithuania | Yes | Yes (basic examination on the Constitution) | No | |
| Netherlands | Yes (A2, oral and written) | Yes | Municipalities can oblige immigrants to attend a programme | integration course: 1998; test: 2007 |
| Portugal | Yes | no | no | 2008 |
| Romania | Yes | no | no | |
| UK | Yes (B1 or progress of at least one level) (IOM 2011k, p. 15) | Yes ('Life in the UK' test) | No, but if their level of English is below B1, they may opt for attending a course | 2007 |

| Country | Justification of the test | Preparation | Costs |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Austria | Reference to the positive experiences in the Netherlands. To facilitate participation in the economic, cultural, and social life of Austria. | | Literacy module: average 350 EUR, German language module: between 750 and 2,500 EUR. Reimbursement is possible. Only the language exam: between 50 EUR and 100 EUR. |
| Belgium | To guarantee that the fundamental values of the host country are shared by everyone. To test the willingness to integrate. To give immigrants the opportunity to participate and function in society. (van Avermaet & Gysen 2009, p. 119) | | The language courses are free of charge for all participants (compulsory as well as voluntary participants) |
| Czech Republic | | Sample tests available online | The first try is paid by the state. Test fee: 1,500 CZK. (Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic 2009, p. 24) |
| Denmark | To render Danish values visible and signal that the society expects foreigners to make an effort to integrate as participating and contributing citizens, equal to other citizens. To urge migrants to seek and obtain employment. (Ersbøll 2010b, p. 114) | The municipalities have to offer each newcomer an integration programme based on skills, background, and needs. The details must be laid down in an individual contract. The programme can last up to 3 years. (Wiesbrock 2009, p. 301) | Free language tuition for up to 3 years. Candidates who want to take a language exam without having attended a course maybe required to pay a fee of about 130 EUR. 'Active citizenship test': 90 EUR. |
| Estonia | | | |

| Country | Justification of the test | Preparation | Costs |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| France | To remedy the alleged failure of immigrant integration. To reinforce the route towards 'intégration républicaine' and to better evaluate three main elements of an immigrant's integration: the personal commitment of foreigners to French republican principles, the effective respect for these principles and sufficient knowledge of the French language. (Carrera & Wiesbrock 2009, p. 21) | welcome and integration contract provides a great variety of services and programmes | All training and information sessions are state-financed. |
| Germany | Reference to the Netherlands. To promote integration, special focus on isolated women. To acquaint foreigners with the way of life in Germany so that they can act independently in all areas of daily life. To develop a positive attitude towards and identification with the German state, knowledge of the rights and duties as residents and citizens. (Carrera & Wiesbrock 2009, p. 21) | mandatory language and/or orientation course | The test fee (for those who take the exam without having attended a course) differs per federal state; in most states, it is between 95 EUR and 125 EUR. Language and integration course: 1 EUR/teaching hour; in total: 645 EUR. Recipients of welfare or unemployment benefits can apply for an exemption. Immigrants who pass the integration exam within 2 years can claim half of their contribution back. (Stevenson & Schanze 2009, p. 96) |
| Greece | | | |
| Italy | | a TV programme (www.cantieriditalia.rai.it) for language and civic education. (Ministero dell' Interno n.d.) | |

| Country | Justification of the test | Preparation | Costs |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Latvia | not to promote the integration of immigrants but the focus was on 'non-citizens'. ¹⁰ The language requirement is a device for integration into Latvian society. | No state-organized courses. General information and a sample examination are available on the internet. A preparatory book is also available. | the test is free of charge. In case of unjustified non-appearance: 14 EUR. |
| Lithuania | | | |
| Netherlands | to combat the 'failed integration of large groups' of immigrants with a more compelling and result-oriented integration policy. The knowledge of the Dutch language and the acceptance of Dutch norms and values are necessary to 'fully participate in Dutch society'. | integration course in which knowledge of the language and of Dutch society are taught. Sample test is available online. Free preparation courses. | a course offered by the municipality: maybe 270 EUR for the course and exams. For others: the costs are much higher. The average exam fee: 126 EUR. But it varies largely between 81 EUR and 1,200 EUR. |
| Portugal | | | |
| Romania | | | |
| UK | to increase economic activity; to decrease the burden of the state; to improve social integration. | no official courses. 'Life in the UK' handbook. | 'Life in the UK' test: 34 GBP. 'Life in the UK' handbook: 9.99 GBP. Exemption from fees is possible. |

¹⁰ 'Non-citizens': former Soviet citizens who migrated to or were born in Latvia during Soviet occupation and who after 1991 did not qualify for Latvian citizenship.

| Country | Exemption | Sanctions (Consequences of failure to pass test or to attend course) | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| | | Consequences for entitlement to permanent residence permit | Consequences for renewal of temporary residence permit | Administrative fine | Consequences for social benefits |
| Austria | 1. refugees 2. highly skilled labour migrants who intend to stay in Austria for more than 24 months and their family members. | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Belgium | 1. EU and EEA nationals and their family members. 2. serious illness, mental or physical disability 3. over the age of 65 4. certain certificates or diplomas 5. labour migrants and their families (with the exception of religious ministers). (Foblets & Yanasmayan 2010, p. 288) | No | No | Yes: 50 and 5000 EUR (Foblets & Yanasmayan 2010, p. 290) | Yes |

| Country | Exemption | Sanctions (Consequences of failure to pass test or to attend course) | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Consequences for entitlement to permanent residence permit | Consequences for renewal of temporary residence permit | Administrative fine | Consequences for social benefits |
| Denmark | 1. disabilities and long-term illnesses 2. foreigners 'with strong ties to Denmark' ¹¹ | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Estonia | basic, secondary or higher education in the Estonian language (Estonian Police 2011) | | | | |
| France | holders of a 'skills and talents' visa | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Germany | | Yes | Yes (Wiesbrock 2009, pp. 306-7) | Yes | Yes |
| Greece | | | | | |
| Italy | | | | | |
| Latvia | refugees | Yes | No | No | No |

¹¹ Strong ties to Denmark are possessed by the following people: Danish minority in South Schleswig, former Danish citizens, foreigners with Danish parents, and Argentinean citizens with Danish parents or grandparents.

| Country | Exemption | Sanctions (Consequences of failure to pass test or to attend course) | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Consequences for entitlement to permanent residence permit | Consequences for renewal of temporary residence permit | Administrative fine | Consequences for social benefits |
| Latvia | refugees | Yes | No | No | No |
| Lithuania | | | | | |
| Netherlands | unilateral or bilateral privileges (e.g. Japan, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, USA) (Besselink 2009, p. 250) | Yes. | No. | Yes. (Besselink 2009, p. 248) | Yes. |
| Portugal | | | | | |
| Romania | | | | | |
| UK | 1. The parent, grandparent or other dependent relative of a British citizen or settled person. 2. refugees 3. victims of domestic violence 4. foreign nationals discharged from the armed forces. | Yes | No | No | No |

Naturalisation

Integration requirements during naturalisation procedure are more widespread and have a longer history in the Member States of the EU. Therefore, 22 out of the 27 countries require non-nationals¹² wishing to acquire the respective citizenship via naturalisation to comply with integration conditions. These are compared in Table 3. The most fundamental element of all integration requirements is language tests which are applied in every Member State under investigation.¹³ Knowledge of the society exam is applied by 13 Member States.¹⁴ These tests aim to check the applicants' familiarity with basic historical, legal, political, and cultural characteristics of the respective host country. Countries with a federal system (namely, Austria and Germany) also test the knowledge about the respective provincial state's societal features. Luxembourg is the only EU Member State that organises mandatory citizenship course (without test at the end) in order get naturalisation applicants acquainted with the country's history, legal and political system, and culture (Ministry of Justice of Luxembourg 2008, p. 40). Only Denmark and Latvia set higher language requirements (by one grade) for naturalisation than for the issuance of long-term residence permit. It is also interesting to note that while Italy sets language condition for long-term residence permit, it does not for naturalisation. The comparative Table also reveals that Slovenia is the only country where both preparation and eventual test-taking can be done free of charge.

¹² Not only TCNs, EU citizens as well.

¹³ Hungary does not explicitly stipulate a language test in the relevant legal act, although passing the constitutional examination held in Hungarian and consisting of both oral and written part is impossible without very high language proficiency.

¹⁴ In spite of the possibility of introducing a test stipulated in the relevant legal act, Greece currently does not apply a test to evaluate applicants' "familiarity with Greek history and Greek civilization" (Christopoulos 2010b).

Table 3. Integration Conditions for Naturalisation¹⁵

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Year of entry into force | Justification of the test |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Austria | Yes (A2) (Cinar 2010, p. 12) | Yes (basic knowledge of the democratic legal order and the history of Austria and the respective federal state) (IOM 2011a, p. 28) | Language: 1998. Formalisation of language requirement: 2006. Knowledge of society: 2006. (Perchinig 2010a, p. 29) | to reduce the number of naturalisations. It is necessary to prove 'the immigrant's willingness to integrate'. Reference to the success of the Dutch model. Naturalisation as the completion of the integration process. (Perchinig 2010a, p. 31; 2010b, p. 16) |
| Bulgaria | Yes (conversational) (New Balkans Law Office 2007) | No (Smilov & Jileva 2010) | 1998 (Smilov & Jileva 2010, p. 12) | |
| Czech Republic | Yes (Barsova 2010, p. 10) | No (Barsova 2010, p. 18) | | |
| Denmark | Yes (B2, oral and written) (Ersbøll 2010a, p. 25) | Yes (European Commission 2007) | 2002: formalisation of the language requirement (B1); 2005: level B2. 2007: knowledge of society. | to make it possible for immigrants to become active participants in society, self-supporting, and to be acquainted with Danish fundamental values and norms. the acquisition of citizenship presumes that the applicant is already integrated in Danish society (Ersbøll 2010a, 2010b, p. 12; Ersbøll & Gravesen 2010, p. 79) |
| Estonia | Yes (Jarve & Poleschchuk 2010, p. 9) | Yes (knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and the Citizenship Act) (Jarve & Poleschchuk 2010, p. 9) | | |

¹⁵ This table relies on the data presented in Strik et al. (2010, pp. 82-100).

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Year of entry into force | Justification of the test |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Finland | Yes (B1, oral and written, Finnish or Swedish or Finnish sign language) (Fagerlund & Brander 2010, pp. 19-20) | No | 2004 (Fagerlund & Brander 2010, pp. 19-20) | to make immigrants capable of taking care of themselves in Finnish society (Fagerlund & Brander 2010, pp. 19-20) |
| France | Yes (oral) (IOM 2011c, p. 8) | Yes (acceptance of the 'French way of life') | | |
| Germany | Yes (B1, oral and written) (IOM 2011d, p. 30) | Yes (knowledge of the legal and social system, and the way of life in the Federal territory) | 2000: language skills. 2007: formalised language test. 2008: knowledge of society test. | to guarantee a more uniform interpretation and application of the language requirement. To guarantee the immigrants' participation in the political decision-making process. Naturalisation is the culmination of successful integration. (de Groot, Kuipers & Weber 2009, p. 61; van Oers 2010, p. 78) |
| Greece | Yes ("sufficient knowledge of the Greek language") (Christopoulos 2010a) | Not enforced ("familiarity with Greek history and Greek civilization") (Christopoulos 2010a) | | language knowledge will enable the applicant to "fulfil the duties emanating from Greek citizenship" and allow for "smooth integration into the country's economic and social life". (Christopoulos 2010a) |
| Hungary | No, not explicitly tested | Yes (oral and written constitutional examination in Hungarian at the level of a 14-year-old student. (IOM 2011f, p. 15) | 1993 | to demonstrate attachment to Hungary. To contribute to the moral relevance of Hungarian citizenship. (Tóth 2010, p. 216) |

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Year of entry into force | Justification of the test |
|-------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Latvia | Yes (B1, oral and written) (van Avermaet 2009, p. 30) | Yes (written or oral) | 1994 | to build a civil society and to define a shared system of values. |
| Lithuania | Yes (A2, oral and written) (Kuris 2010, pp. 25, 34) | Yes (the basic provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania) (IOM 2011i, p. 9; Kuris 2010, p. 34) | 1995 | |
| Luxembourg | Yes (Luxembourgish language, aural comprehension: B1, oral expression: A2) (Scuto 2010, p. 11) | No (but mandatory citizenship courses) (Scuto 2010, p. 11) | 2001 (Horner 2009, pp. 153-4) | to promote integration and cohesion. To ensure that candidates are able to participate in the social and political life of Luxembourg. (Ministry of Justice of Luxembourg 2009, pp. 11, 16) |
| Malta | Yes (Buttigieg 2010, p. 10) | No | | |

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Year of entry into force | Justification of the test |
|--------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Netherlands | Yes (A2, oral and written) | Yes | 2000: language and knowledge of society test. 2003: the tests are formalised and standardized. 2007: Original 'naturalisation examination' replaced by 'integration examination' at the same level. This means that the Netherlands requires newcomers to meet the same standards as future citizens. (van Oers 2009, pp. 124, 127; van Oers, de Hart & Groenendijk 2010, pp. 23-4) | to ensure that future Dutch nationals are able to make use of the rights and obligations attached to Dutch citizenship. To be able to participate in the society. To reduce the number of naturalisations. To have a more uniform interpretation and application of the language requirement. |
| Poland | Yes. (Górny & Pudzianowska p. 10) | No | | |
| Portugal | Yes (A2) (Picarra & Gil 2010, p. 21) | No (Picarra & Gil 2010, p. 21) | | |
| Romania | Yes. ('a good knowledge of the Romanian language') (IOM 2011j, p. 11; Iordarchi 2010, p. 8) | Yes. ('elementary notions of Romanian culture and civilisation', familiarity with the Constitution) (Iordarchi 2010, p. 8) | 1999: language and knowledge of society. 2003: knowledge of the national anthem. (Iordarchi 2009, p. 186) | to make TCNs capable of integrating into the society (IOM 2011j, p. 11) |

| Country | Is knowledge of the language tested (required level)? | Is knowledge of the society tested? | Year of entry into force | Justification of the test |
|-----------------|---|---|--|--|
| Slovakia | Yes (basic level, oral and written). | Yes (general knowledge about the Slovak Republic) (Migration Information Center n.d.) | | |
| Slovenia | Yes (elementary) (Medved 2010, p. 13) | No | 1994: obligatory examination (Medved 2009, p. 315) | |
| Spain | Yes. (Marin & Sobrino 2010, p. 17) | Yes (Spanish democratic institutions or history) (Marin & Sobrino 2010, p. 17) | | |
| UK | Yes (B1) | Yes ('Life in the UK' test) | 2004: Formalised language requirement. 2005: language requirement merged with the knowledge of society test. | to strengthen the ability of new citizens to participate in society and to engage actively in the democracy. To reinforce the sense of common identity. To prevent both the marginalisation of individuals and division between communities.(van Oers 2009, pp. 116, 121-2; Ryan 2009, p. 280) |

| Country | Preparation for the Tests and Costs | Fee | Exemptions |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| Austria | No state-regulated preparation courses for the knowledge of society test. Society test: preparation material (sample questions included) published by the federal and provincial governments; a training programme can be bought at www.staatsbuergerschaft.com (12 and 18 EUR). Language preparation course is organized: costs vary between 1,500 to 2,500 EUR. (de Groot, Kuipers & Weber, 2009, p. 54; Perchinig 2010a, p. 35, 2010b, p. 48) | The preparation script and the naturalisation test are free of charge. | from language test: native speakers; those who fulfilled the language requirement at permanent residence stage; those who are in school with a positive grade in the subject German. from civic test: TCNs with an Austrian school leaving certificate that includes the subject history and civics at least the level of grade four of secondary school; those who are in school with a positive grade in the subject 'history and civics' at the level of the fourth year of compulsory secondary school from both: over a certain age (Cinar 2010, p. 13; de Groot, Kuipers & Weber, 2009, p. 57) |
| Bulgaria | | | |
| Czech Republic | | 10 000 CZK. (Home in the Czech Republic n.d) | |
| Denmark | free three-year language courses. For the civic knowledge test, they can prepare by studying a textbook which can either be bought, viewed at the Ministry of Integration website, or downloaded as an MP3 file. Questions are not published since 2008. | Test fee: 89 EUR. Renewed applications are free of charge. | from language exam: those who have passed grade 9 or 10 of Danish public school with a mark of 6 or higher in each Danish discipline. Both: limited possibilities on the grounds of mental or physical impediment. (Ersbøll 2010b, p. 144) |

| Country | Preparation for the Tests and Costs | Fee | Exemptions |
|----------------|---|---|--|
| Estonia | Free consultations are available before taking the Estonian language exam and the civic one as well. Several support materials published online. The cost of the Estonian language training might be fully reimbursed. (The Website of the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre in Estonia 2010) | Civic exam: free of charge. Language test: 12.78 EUR. (Jarve & Poleshchuk 2010, p. 10) | 1. completed basic, secondary or higher education in the Estonian language 2. Individuals born before 1 January 1930: no written part of the language exam but do have to take a written test in the Constitution and the Citizenship Act. (Jarve & Poleshchuk 2010, p. 9) |
| Finland | | Language exam: 77 EUR. (Fagerlund & Brander 2010, p. 32) | 1. completed basic education in Finnish or Swedish 2. over the age of 65. 3. due to state of health, sensory handicap or a speech defect (Fagerlund & Brander 2010, pp. 20-1) |
| France | | | |
| Germany | No state-regulated preparation courses for the knowledge of society test, but all questions and answers are available online. Furthermore, booklets have been published. For language test: integration courses. Costs for the course are normally 645 EUR, but reduced fees may apply. | Language test: 100 EUR or higher, except Berlin where the costs are 23 EUR. The Einbürgerung test costs 25 EUR. | language test: native speakers; immigrants who have obtained a German secondary school diploma or higher or who have 'successfully' attended a German-speaking school at least for 4 years. Einbürgerungstest: certificates of general education Both: persons who have reached the age of 60 and who have been living in Germany for a period of 12 years. (Hailbronner 2010, pp. 10-1) |
| Greece | | | |

| Country | Preparation for the Tests and Costs | Fee | Exemptions |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| Hungary | Preparatory courses are set up by the administrative offices. The costs of these courses vary between 5-10 EUR. Candidates can however also choose to follow courses set up by NGOs or private agencies, or study from a textbook (6 EUR). (Tóth 2010, pp. 218-9) | 20 EUR (Tóth 2010, pp. 218) | 1. attended a Hungarian language primary or secondary school or university. 2. Students studying for a certificate in Hungary. 3. Immigrants with a Hungarian ascendant or whose origin from Hungary is probable if the knowledge of Hungarian is proved. 4. Persons aged 65 or over 5. health reasons. (Kovács & Tóth 2010, p. 6; Tóth 2010, p. 220) |
| Latvia | Applicants can prepare by studying a book on the Latvian language examination (2.60 EUR), a book on basic questions on Latvian history and Constitution (4.80 EUR), and a book with recommendations on the methods of preparation for the examination on Satversme, the national anthem and history (2 EUR). Sample language and civic knowledge exams are available on the internet. No state-regulated preparation courses for the knowledge of society test. Language courses cost 35 EUR. Free courses are also offered by the State Language Agency. (Hogan-Brun 2009, p. 44; Kruma 2010, p. 253) | | Language: 1. persons who graduated from elementary, secondary or higher education where the instruction language was not Latvian, and who have passed a centralised examination in Latvian, are exempted from the language test if they apply within 2 years following this examination. 2. Applicants who have been educated in Latvian (no time limit). 3. Applicants beyond the age of 65 have to take the oral part of test only. Both: the very severely disabled, severely disabled persons with progressive mental illness, and disabled persons who are deaf or deaf and dumb. (Kruma 2010, p. 252) |
| Lithuania | | 6 EUR. (Migracijos Departament as 2011) | Both: 1. over the age of 65. 2. 0 to 55% capacity for work. 3. Grave chronic mental diseases.(Kuris 2010) |

| Country | Preparation for the Tests and Costs | Fee | Exemptions |
|--------------------|---|---|--|
| Luxembourg | Free language courses and mock exams available online. (Ministry of Justice of Luxembourg 2009) | Civic classes are free. Language test: 75 EUR. Full reimbursement is available. | Both: 1. at least 7 years in a Luxembourgish school 2. those who lived on Luxembourgish territory prior to 31 December 1984. (Scuto 2010, p. 11) |
| Malta | | | |
| Netherlands | no preparatory courses; the content of the test is undisclosed. (van Oers 2009, pp. 125, 127) | In total, 230 EUR but the fee varies greatly. (van Oers 2009, p. 127) | 1. Native speakers: immigrants from Belgium (Flanders) or Surinam if they can submit a high school diploma proving that a pass mark was obtained for the subject 'Dutch'. 2. Secondary school diploma or higher. 3. Those who have followed education in the Netherlands for a period of eight years during the obligatory schooling age (5-16). 4. over the age of 65 provided that a period of residence of 15 years is proved. 5. Illiterates 6. the disabled (van Oers 2009, p. 125) |
| Poland | | | |

| Country | Preparation for the Tests and Costs | Fee | Exemptions |
|-----------------|--|--|---|
| Portugal | Free Portuguese language courses are available. (Picarra & Gil 2010) | | Exempted from written exam: 1. over the age of 65 2. serious health conditions. (Picarra & Gil 2010, pp. 21-2) |
| Romania | | | |
| Slovakia | | | 1. minor applicants younger than 14 years 2. a person representing significant benefit for the Slovak Republic. (Migration Information Center n.d.) |
| Slovenia | Free-of-charge Slovenian language course and programme for getting acquainted with Slovenian history, culture and constitutional system. (Slovenian Ministry of Interior n.d.) | the first try is free of charge (Slovenian Ministry of Interior n.d.) | 1. the applicant went to school or acquired education at a higher or at a university level in Slovenia 2. over the age of 60 and has actually lived in the country for 15 years or has acquired an elementary or secondary education in the Slovenian language in a neighbouring country where there are autochthonous Slovene minorities. 3. illiterates 5.health reasons. (Medved 2010, pp. 13-4) |
| Spain | | | |
| UK | official study guide is published (9.99 GBP). No state-regulated preparation courses for the knowledge of society test. (UK Border Agency n.d.b; van Oers 2010, p. 88) | 'Life in the UK' test: 34 GBP. The costs of the ESOL courses (for immigrants whose level of English is below B1) vary depending on the provider and the kind of course. Exemptions are widely available. (UK Border Agency 2010) | civic knowledge: 1. over the age of 65 2. serious physical or mental condition. (UK Border Agency n.d.c) |

Conclusions

Integration conditions have appeared, proliferated, and gradually become more restrictive within the EU. Immigrants are required to sit a language and/or civic knowledge test and/or attend language tuition and/or civic education courses in order to enter EU countries for the purpose of family reunification, obtain permanent residence, and acquire citizenship. It is no surprise that the introduction of the new requirements has resulted in reductions in the number of both applications for and acquisitions of the respective legal status (van Oers, Ersbøll & Kostakopoulou 2010, p. 322). All in all, the Netherlands has the most restrictive integration tests regime and the trend across the EU points towards tighter requirements as gradually more country introduces integration conditions,¹⁶ moves the place of test-taking abroad, and increases the level of the required knowledge or the fees of the existing tests. Today only four countries have no integration conditions in force: Belgium (see the special case of the Flemish Regions), Cyprus, Ireland, and Sweden. The formation of common EU characteristics is facilitated by the several forums where Member States can learn from each other and copy measures developed elsewhere in the EU (Kostakopoulou 2010). It has been argued, therefore, that a weakening of national distinctiveness, and a convergence with respect to the general direction and content of integration policy can be observed across the Member States (Joppke 2007a, 2007b).

One of the common characteristics of the emerging EU civic integration paradigm is the predominance of an approach based on law enforcement and sanctions (Kostakopoulou 2010, pp. 8-10; Tóth 2010, p. 234). Most EU countries apply integration conditions that are “mandatory, sanction-oriented (fines, no entry, no family reunification, non-renewal of residence permits, deportation, and unsuccessful naturalisation) and test-based” (Kostakopoulou 2010, p. 8). Hence, “the focus of integration policy is no longer on the equalisation of opportunity, but rather on the discouragement and penalisation of migrants who do not possess certain attributes” (Ryan 2008, p. 312). In other words, integration is set by governments to foster migration control, which is probably most clearly seen as integration tests must increasingly be taken before entry. Notwithstanding the official aim of facilitating migrants’ integration into the host society, language and integration requirements prevent migrants from accessing a more secure status, and hence serve as a means of prolonging their exclusion (van Oers, Ersbøll & Kostakopoulou 2010).

¹⁶ Introducing further eligibility criteria is recently on the agenda in many countries: for example Czech Republic (Barsova 2010, p. 18), Portugal (Picarra & Gil 2010, p. 36) or Ireland (Handoll 2010).

The consequence of failing a test or notoriously non-attending a mandatory course is the denial of the respective legal status. This might entail non-entry, expulsion, less social, economic, and political rights, insecurity, the feeling of subordination, and the continual existence of alienness. The outcome of the tests, therefore, has an enormous impact on TCNs' life, although appeals are usually not guaranteed (Strik et al. 2010). In addition, in many instances the basic principles of transparency, most saliently in relation to preparation, test assessment or the composition of the required material, are not followed.

The introduction of formalised tests also brought about a change in the relationship between legal status and integration. Naturalisation used to be perceived as a means for integration, it nowadays is seen as the finalisation of a completed integration process. First one needs to prove that one is well integrated by the standards of the community of which one wishes to be part before formal status can be granted (Besselink 2009, p. 252). The nature of integration conditions suggests that naturalisation is perceived as the end of the integration process, the crown rather than a means of integration (Groenendijk 2004). This new integration policy puts the emphasis on the immigrants' duties and makes the state's status-ensuring steps conditional upon the fulfilment of those imposed requirements. Thereby, the originally two-way process of integration has been divided into chronologically separate stages resulting in two one-way phases. 'Integration' then veils the actual conventional setting of assimilation, incorporation or, in its more radical expression, acculturation philosophy (Carrera 2006).

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