



Migrating Towards

Participation:

Immigrants and Their Descendants in the Political Process

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Policy Brief

Abstract

Improving the political integration of immigrants is an important task for the European Union. The number of people with an immigrant background in the EU is gradually rising, a trend that is expected to continue. As a result, immigrants and their descendants are likely to play an increasingly significant role in the political life of Member States, as well as at the European level. Nevertheless, political parties in the EU seem to have neglected this phenomenon. Immigrants from third countries and their descendants rarely appear as party members; party leaders at the local, regional, national and EU levels; or as paid officials or candidates. Political parties should therefore consider more carefully the political potential of immigrants and their descendants.

Keywords Integration of immigrants – Political parties – Centre-right – Political participation – Voters – Office holders – France – Germany – Spain – Lithuania – Integration – European Parliament

¹ We would like to thank Naďa Kovalčíková, Jan Niessen and Anne Friel for their assistance in the initial stages of the research for this paper. We would also like to thank Stefaan De Corte, Henna Hopia, Roland Freudenstein, Alex Kirchberger and Ines Prainsack for their helpful comments and suggestions. Vesta Ratkevičiūtė kindly provided insights concerning Lithuania. Andraž Kastelic commented on an earlier draft and completed a number of references. Finally, our thanks go to Communicative English for their language editing work for this paper. The authors are responsible for any errors or omissions.

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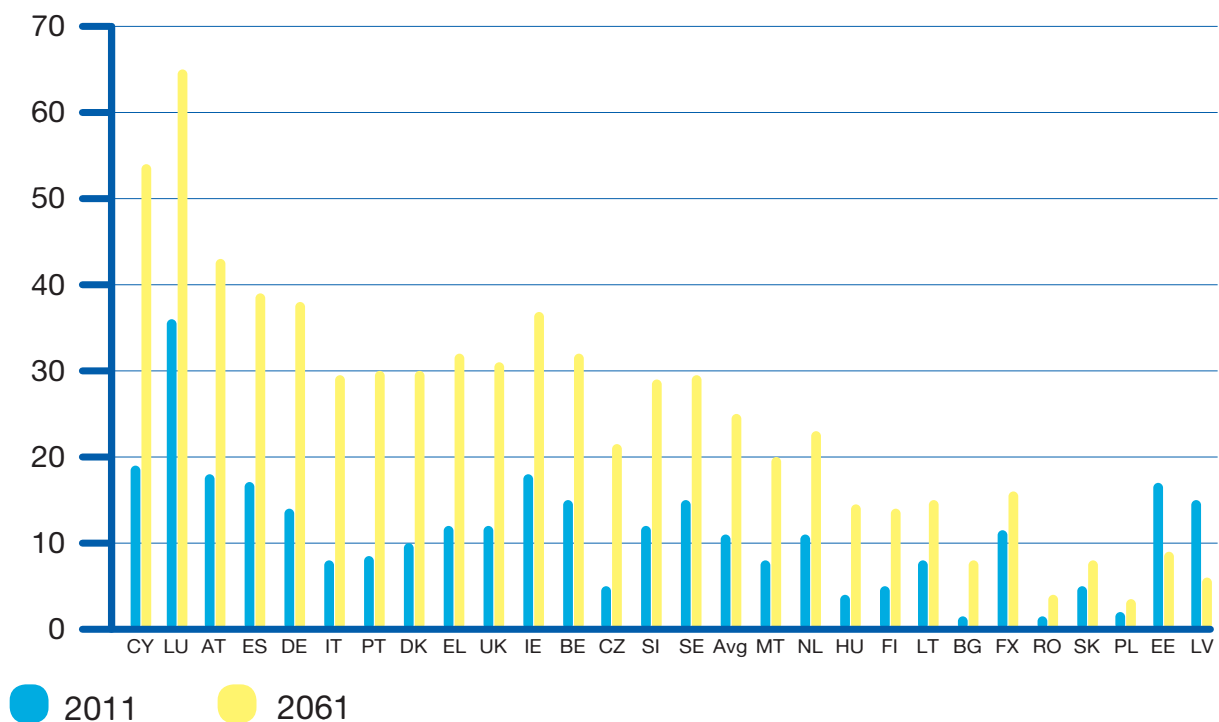
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Introduction

Increasing immigration to the EU—and the integration of immigrants and their descendants into society—poses challenges to national and EU-level political parties. These parties have struggled to incorporate immigrants and their descendants as members, officials and candidates, and have not sufficiently tapped into the electoral potential of the immigrant population.

The unfulfilled potential of immigrants in politics is all the more striking given the ever-increasing numbers of first-, second- and third-generation immigrants residing in the EU. In 2010, the number of foreign-born² residents from third countries (non-EU) totalled 31.4 million, representing approximately 6.3% of the EU’s population.³ Popula-

Figure 1 Share of people with a foreign background in EU Member States in 2011, and projections for 2061



● 2011 ● 2061

Source: G. Lanzieri, *Fewer, Older and Multicultural? Projections of the EU Populations by Foreign/National Background*, Eurostat (Luxembourg, 2011), 18.

² A foreign-born person is someone whose place of birth or whose mother’s residence at the time of his or her birth was outside the country of his or her usual residence. Foreigners may become nationals, but if they were born abroad, they remain among the foreign-born population.

³ K. Vasileva, Population and Social Conditions, Eurostat, *Statistics in Focus* 34/2011, 1, accessed at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-034/EN/KS-SF-11-034-EN.PDF on 27 September 2012. The figure of 31.4 million included foreigners from third countries who resided in the EU. In 2010, their number totalled 20.2 million, representing some 4.0% of the EU’s total population. Foreigners are persons who are not citizens of the country in which they reside.

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tion projections speak of an ever-increasing proportion in almost every Member State of people with a foreign background, as shown in the graph above. Figure 1 shows Eurostat projections indicating that in many Member States, the share of the immigrant population is set to double or even triple.

In many countries, however, there are formal (institutional) and informal barriers to the political participation of immigrants, a situation which contrasts with other fields in life such as the arts or sport, where immigrants are much better integrated. In addition, political parties do not seem to be making use of existing monitoring tools that would enable them to map the electorate, voters, party members and candidates in order to determine these people's migration backgrounds.

The lack of participation of immigrants in the political process is problematic for two reasons. First, without political participation immigrants do not fully integrate into society and may become alienated. Parallel societies may emerge based on ethnicity or religion which emphasise differences between the allegedly failing European political and economic systems and the 'pure worlds' centred on the distinct values of minority religions or cultures. This results in a lack of social and political cohesion and, in extreme cases, in the covert or overt support of violent responses to the problems of society. Second, political parties in general, and those on the centre-right in particular, are missing out on the electoral potential of migrant voters.

This lack of participation in mainstream politics, and the resulting possibility of radicalisation, becomes all the more visible in times of economic crises. Xenophobic reactions drive wedges between the majority society and immigrants as well as between different immigrant communities.

From a politically strategic point of view, the integration of immigrants into political life in the medium and long term is therefore crucial. It is logical that people with an immigrant background should be represented as voters, party members, candidates and party leaders.

Although parties across the political spectrum are faced with this phenomenon, this policy brief focuses on centre-right parties that are members of the European People's Party (EPP). The EPP has long held that because people are 'free, responsible and interdependent', they 'must take part in the construction of society'.⁴ The party believes in the fundamental equality of human beings and holds 'that the same rights must be recognised and the same duties imposed according to each person's abilities'.⁵



⁴ EPP, *Basic Programme*, final text adopted by the ninth EPP Congress, Athens, November 1992, 4, accessed at http://www.32462857769.net/EPP/e-PressRelease/PDF/athene-BASIC_PROGRAM001_.pdf on 6 September 2012.

⁵ EPP, *Basic Programme*, final text adopted by the ninth EPP Congress, Athens, November 1992, 5, accessed at http://www.32462857769.net/EPP/e-PressRelease/PDF/athene-BASIC_PROGRAM001_.pdf on 6 September 2012.

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What logically follows is an assumption that political life in a country should reflect the complexity of its society.⁶

The EPP is recognising that immigrants are under-represented in the political process. As Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Secretary General Herman Gröhe stated, there is 'a lot of catching up to do on the parliamentary representation of ethnic Germans⁷ and people from ethnic minority backgrounds'.⁸ Leading EPP figures, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have recently criticised prevailing approaches to the integration of immigrants.⁹ As the EPP is the biggest European political family, it has a particular obligation to contribute new ideas. This policy brief aims to add to the debate.

The focus of this policy brief is on voters and office holders. Voting for a party indicates the voter's trust that the party will promote his or her interests; holding office demonstrates that the office holder is trusted to make decisions.

It is important to clarify that this policy brief focuses on third-country immigrants and their descendants, in other words people whose countries of origin lie outside the EU.¹⁰ The political participation of EU citizens residing in other EU countries is a separate topic which poses a different set of challenges.

Finally, alternatives to political involvement exist. Consultative bodies, for example, have been set up in different countries to involve foreign residents in shaping public policies.¹¹ These structures can help involve immigrants in public affairs, and it is sometimes argued that they can serve as alternatives to voting and direct political involvement where, for example, rules prevent non-citizens from voting. However,

⁶ This message has also been strongly advocated by different international and supranational organisations, including the European Commission. See European Commission, *European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*, COM(2011) 455 final (20 July 2011).

⁷ Ethnic Germans have immigrated to Germany, usually from Central and Eastern Europe. They acquire German citizenship automatically once their status is confirmed.

⁸ M. Borchard, 'Germany: Political Parties and the Integration Debate', in V. Novotný (ed.), *Opening the Door? Immigration and Integration in the European Union* (Brussels: Centre for European Studies, 2012), 410.

⁹ K. Connolly, 'Angela Merkel Declares Death of German Multiculturalism', *The Guardian*, 17 October 2010, accessed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-germany-multiculturalism-failures> on 28 September 2012.

¹⁰ This definition includes first-generation immigrants, both non-EU foreigners and non-EU foreign-born residents, as well as their second- and third- generation descendants (native-born people with foreign-born parents or grandparents). This definition excludes politically active people from overseas territories of EU Member States, including MPs and MEPs. Although these people tend not to be geographically European, they are not immigrants to the EU.

¹¹ T. Huddleston, *Consulting Immigrants to Improve National Policies*, Migration Policy Group (Brussels, 29 November 2010), accessed at http://www.migpolgroup.com/publications_detail.php?id=289 on 25 September 2012.



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there is no universal agreement on the merits of such involvement, and exploring this topic would go beyond the scope of this policy brief.

The structure of this policy brief is as follows: The first section covers methodology. In the second section the categories of voters and office holders are analysed in the context of four countries: France, Germany, Spain and Lithuania. The third section examines the representation of immigrants in the European Parliament. The final section includes conclusions and policy recommendations.

Methodology

The main purpose of this policy brief is to analyse two different factors:

1. the participation of first- to third-generation immigrants as voters, and
2. their participation as office holders in centre-right political parties at the national level and in the European Parliament.¹²

These factors are analysed in a comparative perspective, focusing on four EU Member States: France and Germany (two big Western European countries with a tradition of immigration), Spain (a country of recent immigration), and Lithuania (a Baltic country characterised by its Soviet-era immigration). These two factors have been selected from a compendium of benchmarks and indicators prepared by the Migration Policy Group (MPG), a Brussels-based think-tank. This compendium is designed to assess the participation of immigrants in political parties.¹³

For each country, the brief analyses the situation of member parties of the EPP, namely the French Union for a Popular Movement (Groupe de l'Union pour un mouvement Populaire, UMP), the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU), the Spanish Popular Party (Partido Popular, PP) and the Lithuanian Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats (Tėvynės sąjunga - Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai, TS-LKD). The brief also examines the presence of first- to third-generation immigrants as Members of the European Parliament.

¹² Even if some examples of regions in the selected countries are mentioned, an in-depth regional analysis would be beyond the scope of this policy brief.

¹³ The Migration Policy Group is an independent non-profit European organisation specialising in migration issues. Detailed information about these benchmarks and indicators can be found at http://www.migpolgroup.com/publications_detail.php?id=338. Other indicators developed by the MPG, which are not examined in this policy brief, are party members, party leaders and executive structure members, party employees, and party suppliers.



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In addition to the above-mentioned work of the MPG, other useful sources of information in this policy brief have been the Emilie¹⁴ and Politis¹⁵ research projects, the Migrant Integration Policy Index,¹⁶ research papers, and newspaper articles, as well as documents extracted from the websites of institutions at both the national and European levels.

Voters

People with immigrant backgrounds represent a significant part of the electorates of political parties in Europe. As stated above, in 2010, 6.3% of the EU's population was made up of foreign-born third-country nationals. However, this figure excludes second- and third-generation immigrants. Immigrants and their descendants are expected to form an increasing proportion of the electorate in the coming years. Even if the ultimate goal is to integrate these people as full citizens in order to no longer differentiate between those with an immigrant background and the rest of the population, the reality is that immigrants' needs and interests are often diverse. Immigrants' political participation helps create a more inclusive society, and there should be 'equal consideration of the needs, aspirations and contributions of people with a migrant background and those of other individuals'.¹⁷ In addition, bringing immigrants into the political process can be a useful tool to attract new electorates.

For political parties, this means, for example, having immigrants as target groups before the elections, interacting with relevant non-governmental organisations and immigrant associations, and highlighting the importance of the immigrant vote. Contrary to what many people think, and according to a recent survey of immigrant citizens,¹⁸ most immigrants are as interested in voting as native voters.

¹⁴ Emilie, A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship: Legal, Political and Educational Challenges, is a project funded by the European Commission through the Sixth Framework Programme (2006–9). More information is available at <http://emilie.eliamep.gr/>.

¹⁵ Politis, Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries, is a project funded by the European Commission through the Sixth Framework Programme (2004–7). More information is available at <http://www.politis-europe.uni-oldenburg.de/>.

¹⁶ An interactive tool that assesses and compares integration policies in different states, the Migrant Integration Policy Index has been prepared and is updated by the British Council, the MPG and other organisations. More information is available at: <http://www.mipex.eu/>.

¹⁷ A. Kirchberger et al., *Becoming a Party of Choice: A Tool for Mainstreaming Diversity*, Report, Migration Policy Group (Brussels, 2012), 2, accessed at http://www.migpolgroup.com/public/docs/Becoming_a_Party_of_Choice_Mainstreaming_Diversity_in_Political_Parties_FULL_REPORT_EN_01.12.pdf on 15 June 2012.

¹⁸ T. Huddleston, J.D. Tjadenwith and L. Callier, *Immigrant Citizens Survey: How Immigrants Experience Integration in 15 Cities*, King Baudouin Foundation and the Migration Policy Group (Brussels, 2012), 45, accessed at http://www.migpolgroup.com/projects_publications.php?id=53 on 27 September 2012.



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In most countries, only citizens can vote, a stance that the EPP has supported.¹⁹ Consequently, it is useful to distinguish between two different categories of people with immigrant backgrounds: non-citizens and citizens.

Non-citizens

With the exception of Lithuania, none of the countries in this study grants voting rights to non-citizens at any level of electoral participation. In France, the question of granting political rights to foreign residents has been the subject of debate since the early 1970s. The ideals of the French Revolution are usually mentioned by supporters and opponents alike. Those who would grant political rights claim that the principle of equality (*égalité*) is betrayed by not allowing foreign residents to participate in politics. Detractors point out that voting rights necessarily go hand in hand with citizenship, and that this concept in France is equivalent to that of nationality. Therefore, in France the judicial interpretation of the word *nationalité* prevails over the ethnic one (nationhood).²⁰

Even if the naturalisation process is considered quite open in France, some immigrants do not want to or cannot apply for it because some countries of origin do not allow dual nationality. As a result, immigrants may remain distant from the political scene.

The UMP remains opposed to granting voting rights to non-citizens. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy stated in 2008 that voting rights did not fit with his immigration approach because they would reduce rather than add clarity to the issue and because the French lower house rejected a Socialist proposal introducing local voting rights for non-EU residents in 2010.

While in the French case the main point concerning voting rights focuses on the definition of citizenship—in other words, whether it should differ from nationality—in Germany the debate focuses on whether to allow dual citizenship and how tough the naturalisation process should be.²¹ The possibility of having dual citizenship encourages applications for naturalisation and the consequent access to political rights. Cur-

¹⁹ EPP, *A Union of Values*, final text agreed at fourteenth Congress, Berlin, 2001, accessed at http://www.32462857769.net/EPP/e-PressRelease/PDF/13-01-2001%20A%20UNION%20OF%20VALUES.pdf%20EN001_.pdf on 6 September 2012.

²⁰ To read more about this theoretical debate, see H. Andrès, 'Political Participation and Voting Rights of Foreign Residents in France: a Policy Brief', Migration Citizenship Education (Paris, 2009), accessed at <http://migrationeducation.de/fileadmin/uploads/AndresPoliticalRightsFrance.pdf> on 25 September 2012.

²¹ R. Zapata-Barrero and J. Zaragoza, 'Political Representation of Migrants in Spain', Spanish Report on Political Rights, Emilie Research Project and Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona, 2009), accessed at http://www.upf.edu/gritim/_pdf/griip-emilie_wp5.pdf on 25 September 2012.



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rently, apart from some exceptional cases, the only groups entitled to keep their other citizenship are EU citizens and (*Spät-)Aussiedler*, or ethnic Germans. It is worth noting that this policy forces significant minorities, such as Turkish immigrants (Germany's largest immigrant group), to renounce their citizenship in order to become German.

Spain has experienced a massive immigration influx since the mid-1990s.²² As in France and Germany, the Spanish constitution does not grant voting rights to non-citizens. There are some exceptions to this, based on reciprocity agreements with other countries. For example, citizens of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru and Norway may vote in local elections.²³ But even if these reciprocity agreements provide voting opportunities for thousands of residents, it is no less true that they also constitute a sort of legal discrimination, since voting rights are still granted on the basis of one's nationality. It is worth noting that these agreements do not include some immigrant communities with a significant presence in Spain, such as Moroccans, Argentineans, Mexicans and Chinese, among others.

Furthermore, a similarly selective legal framework can be found when it comes to the acquisition of Spanish nationality, which grants full electoral rights. While the general rule establishes a minimum period of residence of 10 years prior to application for naturalisation, for many countries that have historical links with Spain, this period is reduced to two years. The debate in Spain therefore focuses on the legal criteria that should be used for granting voting rights to immigrants and the level at which they should be allowed to vote.²⁴

Lithuania is a country of net emigration. Yet, it experienced an intense flow of immigration during the Soviet occupation from the end of the Second World War to the late 1980s, consisting of Soviet ethnic groups who came to work in the Baltic countries. These were mainly Russian speakers and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainian and Byelorussian speakers. (There is a much older native Polish population in Lithuania, which is not considered here.) According to the 2011 census, the proportion of ethnic minorities was approximately 15%, compared with much higher numbers in the other two Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia. After independence in 1991, almost all Soviet-era immigrants in Lithuania were granted citizenship,²⁵ unlike in Estonia and Latvia, where citizenship requirements have been much stricter. Therefore, in Lithuania, non-citizenship does not constitute a major issue.



²² It remains to be seen whether the wave of emigration from Spain, which has outpaced immigration since the beginning of this decade, will continue.

²³ Spain, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), press release (Madrid, 24 November 2010), accessed at <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np630.pdf> on 22 June 2012.

²⁴ R. Zapata-Barrero, *Political Representation of Migrants in Spain*, Emilie Research Project (September 2009).

²⁵ R. Zukauskienė, *Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Lithuania*, Politis Research Project (2004), 5.

Citizens

Existing studies indicate that voters with an immigrant background are more inclined to side with the political left. In France, surveys show a rather clear attachment of immigrants to the left. For example, in 1998, 83% of Parisian youth with immigrant backgrounds positioned themselves on the political left.²⁶ A major survey published in 2010 by the French national statistical institutes also showed that people with a migrant background vote predominantly for the left.²⁷

Unlike the case of France, studies in Germany have found that about 5.6 million German citizens with the right to vote have a migrant background. Ethnic Germans are the most numerous in this group, while about half a million are of Turkish origin. Different ethnic groups display different voting patterns. While ethnic German immigrants tend to vote mostly for the CDU (70%), Turkish migrants usually opt for the Social Democratic Party (SPD, 57%).²⁸ However, these two major parties are tending to lose ground to smaller parties.²⁹

No systematic studies on the electoral behaviour of Spanish citizens with immigrant backgrounds have been published. Interviews recorded³⁰ before the 2011 general election demonstrate discontent with the lack of attention that immigration received in the political campaigns (the economic crisis overshadowed debates on immigration and integration). However, the potential impact that naturalised immigrants' votes could have on elections should not be underestimated. In the Autonomous Community of Madrid alone there are 178,278 naturalised immigrants.³¹ If they voted for a single party, they would form a strong political force in the region, probably capable of winning one or two seats in the Spanish parliament. However, studies carried out at the local level, focusing on the voting intentions of some particular ethnic minorities, indicate that immigrants would opt for one of the two major parties (the PP or Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE) and that they would generally follow the voting patterns of their local communities.³²

²⁶ A. Escafré-Dublet and P. Simon, *France, from Integration to Diversity. The Political Challenges of Migration-Related Diversity*, Emilie Research Project (September 2009), 2. One should bear in mind, however, that analysing political participation in France is particularly difficult because ethnic data, as a rule, is not included in French census figures.

²⁷ France, Institut national d'études démographiques and Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, *Trajectoires et Origines, Enquête sur la diversité des populations en France* (2010), accessed at http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1516/publi_pdf1_dt168_teo.pdf on 25 September 2012.

²⁸ N. Cyrus, *Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Germany*, Politis Research Project (Oldenburg, 2005), 32.

²⁹ M. Borchard, 'Germany: Political Parties and the Integration Debate', 415.

³⁰ M. Paone, 'Los nuevos españoles se sienten olvidados Madrid', *El País*, 11 November 2011, accessed at http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/11/11/actualidad/1321037719_287301.html on 25 September 2012.

³¹ A. Restrepo, '2011 El voto latino gana poder en estas elecciones marcadas por la crisis' *EnLatino.com*, 19 November 2011, accessed at http://www.enlatino.com/actualidad/elecciones-generales-20-de-noviembre/el-voto-latino-gana-poder-en-espana-en-estas-eleccio?quicktabs_28=2 on 25 September 2012.

³² L. Morales and J. San Martín, *¿Cómo votaría los inmigrantes?*, Zoom Político, Fundación Alternativas (Madrid, 2011).



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Lithuania presents the example of second- and third-generation immigrants well integrated into their host society, which is not always the case in other countries. The ethnic Russian electorate can mostly be found in urban areas, but it constitutes a small part of the whole body of voters. Due to the massive naturalisation of legal residents in Lithuania in the 1990s, the focus is therefore on people who are already citizens. In addition, the acquisition of citizenship is not required to earn voting rights at the local level. In contrast with Germany and France, non-EU permanent residents can vote and stand in local elections.³³

The largely ethnically Lithuanian TS-LKD has not made a significant attempt to woo the Russian immigrant vote. The existence of ethnic parties in Lithuania constitutes an exception, when compared with France, Germany and Spain. In Lithuania, citizens of Russian ethnicity have formed their own parties, which tend to seek pre-election alliances with centre-left, centre and ethnically Polish parties.³⁴ Alternatively, Russian speakers have directly joined larger left-of-centre parties.

Candidates and office holders

In order to achieve a political life that reflects the diversity of a given society, having party candidates from immigrant backgrounds is crucial; they may have a higher appeal to immigrant voters and they may help to mobilise them to vote.³⁵ If these candidates have realistic chances of gaining office, it enhances the political inclusion of people with immigrant backgrounds.

Candidates

In all four countries under consideration, only citizens are eligible to stand for national elections. The focus here is on naturalised citizens and second- and third-generation immigrants.



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³³ J. Kovalenko et al., 'New immigrants in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania', Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (Tallinn, 2010), 65, accessed at <http://www.lichr.ee/main/assets/epim-lichr.pdf> on 25 September 2012.

³⁴ R. Zukauskienė, *Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Lithuania*, 31; 'Russian Alliance and People's Party to join Polish candidate list in Lithuania's general elections', 15min.lt, 25 September 2012, accessed at <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/politics/russian-alliance-and-people-s-party-to-join-polish-candidate-list-in-lithuania-s-general-elections-526-243741> on 25 September 2012.

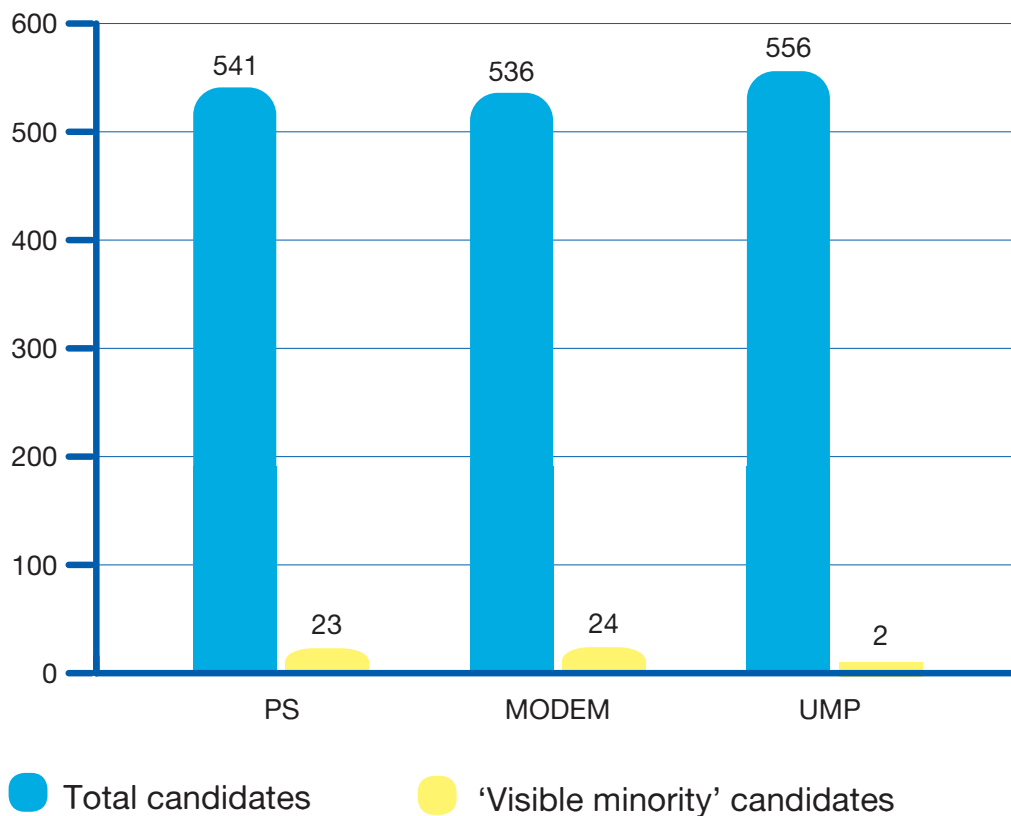
³⁵ T. Huddleston, J.D. Tjadenwith and L. Callier, *Immigrant Citizens Survey: How immigrants Experience Integration in 15 Cities*, 46.

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In the case of France, in the absence of ethnic data and of more recent studies (the 2012 national elections took place just before this was written), we need to look at studies carried out by the Conseil représentatif des associations noires (CRAN).³⁶ According to this study, in 2007, CRAN identified two candidates with immigrant backgrounds in the UMP (0.36% of UMP candidates), 23 in the Socialist Party (4.52%) and 24 in the Mouvement Démocrate (4.48%). Figure 2 shows the number of candidates from visible minorities in the French national elections of 2007.

Figure 2 Numbers of candidates from visible minorities, French national elections, 2007



Source: Data provided by the Conseil représentatif des associations noires, cited in: A. Kirchberger et al., *'Becoming a Party of Choice: A Tool for Mainstreaming Diversity'*, Report, Migration Policy Group (Brussels, 2012), 13.



³⁶ A. Kirchberger et al., *Becoming a Party of Choice*, 13.

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For Germany, data is available for the 2005 federal elections.³⁷ In these elections, 4% of candidates had an immigrant background. This included ethnic Germans, who represented 54% of these candidates and who, as immigrants with an EU background, are not considered in the current study. As a result, the percentage of candidates with a non-ethnic German immigrant background was just 1.84%. The percentage of candidates with an immigrant background out of the total number of candidates per political party showed that in the case of the CDU/CSU (Christian Social Union, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU), the figure was only 0.75%, while it was 1% for the SPD and 3% for the Greens.³⁸ As already noted in the section on voters, the two major German parties are losing ground to smaller parties. The same tendency can be observed in relation to candidates. In 2005, the Green Party had the highest number of candidates with an immigrant background.

Spain, where Spanish nationality is a requirement to stand for national elections, is experiencing a much more recent wave of immigration. Consequently, the number of naturalised or native-born citizens with an immigrant background is not as high as in France or Germany. Nevertheless, the number of naturalised citizens has radically increased in recent years; between 2009 and 2011, Spanish citizenship was awarded to approximately 350,000 immigrants. In the period 1995–2011, a total of 750,000 immigrants were granted Spanish nationality.³⁹ The number of immigrants with Spanish nationality is roughly 1 million, out of a total foreign-born population (non-EU) of 3.3 million⁴⁰ (around 7% of the total population).

With this data in mind, we can expect a rather low representation of people with immigrant backgrounds on the lists of candidates running for election. In fact, estimates indicate that only around 10–15 of the 1,195 candidates (0.8–1.25%) in the last general election in Spain (combining elections to both the Congress and the Senate) had an immigrant background, of which at least one belonged to the PP and four to the Socialists.⁴¹

Office holders

The actual number of office holders in France with immigrant backgrounds tends to be lower than the number of candidates: one member of the French lower house



³⁷ Data concerning the ethnic background of candidates were not found for more recent elections.

³⁸ A. Kirchberger et al., *Becoming a Party of Choice*, 14.

³⁹ Observatorio Permanente Andaluz de las Migraciones, *Evolución y características principales de los inmigrantes nacionalizados en España* (6 June 2012), 1, accessed at http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/empleo/OPAM/sites/default/files/DOC/Tema_OPAM_6_Junio_2012.pdf on 25 June 2012.

⁴⁰ Spain, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), 'Avance de la explotación estadística del Padrón a 1 de enero de 2012', press release (Madrid, 19 April 2012), accessed at <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np710.pdf> on 26 June 2012.

⁴¹ M. Paone, *Los nuevos españoles se sienten olvidados*.

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with an immigrant background belongs to the UMP and three such MPs belong to the Socialists. These four *députés* constitute 0.7% of all MPs. These data need to be contrasted with the total number of immigrants and their descendants living in France, which amounts to 11.5 million people—approximately 19% of the total population.

In the German Bundestag, even though the number of office holders with an immigrant background has steadily increased over the past two decades, almost doubling the number from the previous legislative period to the current one, it is still very low. There are currently 21 MPs out of 622, or about 3.4%, with foreign roots in the *Bundestag*, but this number includes some members with an EU background.⁴² In 2008, the percentage of such MPs per party out of their respective total number of seats was as follows: CDU/CSU 0.9%, SPD 1.4% and Greens 7.8%.⁴³ This 3.4% of representatives with an immigrant background is to be compared with the share of people with immigrant backgrounds in Germany. According to the Federal Statistical Office, as of 2010, 19.3% of the total German population had immigrant backgrounds.⁴⁴

In the case of Spain it is useful to take a closer look at the local level for two reasons: the number of office holders is much higher as a result of the nature of the elections (the reciprocity agreements may also apply on the right to stand for elections, allowing for many more candidates) and local-level politics can work as a training ground for the political integration of immigrants.

In the last local elections in Spain, the PP took a big step forward in integrating candidates with an immigrant background. Not only did the party count about 500 candidates with immigrant backgrounds among its ranks, but many of the candidates had access to responsible positions.⁴⁵ Perhaps the prime example is Mayor Juan Antonio de la Morena of a Madrilenian municipality, the first mayor in Spanish history of African origin. The Socialist Party had similar numbers in terms of candidates for the local elections.

In Lithuania, the TS-LKD does not have any MPs with backgrounds from Russia or other post-Soviet states. However, since 1990, the Lithuanian Seimas has had representatives with ethnic minority backgrounds. The tendency in recent years though has been for a decline in the number of these representatives, from 19 seats in 1990 to 14 seats in 2004, representing 10% of the total number of MPs.⁴⁶ These numbers include

⁴² M. Borchard, 'Germany: Political Parties and the Integration Debate'.

⁴³ A. Kirchberger et al., *Becoming a Party of Choice*, 15.

⁴⁴ Germany, Federal Statistical Office, 'Persons with a migration background', Facts and Figures, accessed at <https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/SocietyState/Population/MigrationIntegration/PersonsMigrationBackground/Current.html> on 25 September 2012.

⁴⁵ 'El PP presume de tener casi 500 inmigrantes en las listas electorales para el 22 de mayo' *20minutos.es*, 28 April 2011, accessed at <http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/1033569/0/elecciones/partido-popular/inmigrantes/> on 25 September 2012.

⁴⁶ R. Zukauskienė, *Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Lithuania*, 31.



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Lithuanian citizens of indigenous ethnic Polish extraction, who are not considered in this study. This decline may be explained partially as a result of the change in the electoral system, which encourages political coalitions, provoking the integration of ethnic minority parties into larger political parties.⁴⁷

The number of Russian-speaking MPs has declined as well. The career of the Russian-speaking businessman Viktor Uspaskich constitutes an exception. He established the populist and centrist Labour Party, which became the largest bloc in the Lithuanian parliament in 2004.

European Parliament

Research conducted by the authors of the present study has identified a total of 21 MEPs with some kind of non-EU immigrant background in the current European Parliament, elected in 2009.⁴⁸ Comprehensive data on the immigrant backgrounds of individual MEPs do not exist. The methodology for the count was therefore based on two factors:

- selecting those MEPs whose surnames appear to originate from outside the EU, and
- the researchers' circumstantial knowledge about the MEPs' parentage and country of origin.⁴⁹

This methodology is, of course, highly imperfect, and the count is likely to be imprecise. Alternatives would consist of either individual interviews with all MEPs or a detailed study of their personal histories, both of which would require considerable financial and personnel resources. In the absence of accurate information, the names of the MEPs concerned are not listed here.

⁴⁷ R. Zukauskienė, *Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Lithuania*, 31.

⁴⁸ Defined as first-generation immigrants (both non-EU foreigners and non-EU foreign-born residents), as well as their second- and third-generation descendants (native-born people with foreign-born parents or grandparents).

⁴⁹ This methodology is imperfect, and the count is likely to be imprecise. Alternatives would consist of either individual interviews with all MEPs or a detailed study of their personal histories based on publicly available information, both of which would require considerable financial and personnel resources.



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According to this count, France is, by far, the country with the greatest number of MEPs with immigrant backgrounds (nine), followed by the UK (five). Belgium, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden each have one such MEP. Therefore, 18 out of 27 Member States seem not to have a single representative in the European Parliament with an immigrant background.⁵⁰ These 21 MEPs represent 2.65% of the total number of 754 MEPs, contrasting with an overall EU population of which 6.3% are non-EU immigrants.

The 21 MEPs with a immigrant background are divided as follows among the political groups:

Table 1 MEPs with an immigrant background in the 2009–14 European Parliament

European People's Party (EPP)	4
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (PES)	6
The Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens–EFA)	4
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	4
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	1
European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE–NGL)	1
Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)	1
Total	21

Source: Own compilation

It should be noted that a different study recently published by the Organisation for European Interstate Cooperation (OEIC) counted around 30 MEPs who have some kind of experience with family migration.⁵¹ These 30 MEPs represent approximately 4% of the total number of seats in the 2009–2014 European Parliament. However, this study took into account two categories (representatives from minority languages and representatives who migrated from one EU Member State to another) that are not included in target groups for the present study.

⁵⁰ Another five MEPs of non-European origin were found to represent overseas territories of EU Member States.

⁵¹ The OEIC is a European foundation focused on cross-border issues and the devolution of powers from Brussels to national parliaments. The study cited can be found at http://www.ooiceurope.com/attachment/meps_social_background_201006_201110.pdf, accessed on 21 June 2012. The study goes only to second generation. In other words, MEPs whose grandparents were immigrants—if any—are not counted.



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Discussion and conclusions

The facts and figures in this study clearly demonstrate a discrepancy between the proportion of immigrants in the population and in active political life.

When it comes to voting, the picture described in this brief does not provide clear-cut conclusions. There is a tendency for non-EU immigrants to vote for left-of-centre parties in France, Germany and Lithuania, while the information for Spain is insufficient to judge. Nevertheless, even for the former three countries, voting may depend on the particular immigrant group and, as with voters from the host population, on issues at stake in the particular election. What is clear is that the centre-right has not sufficiently tapped into the voting potential of the immigrant population.

When it comes to candidates and office holders, there is a wide gap between non-EU immigrants as a percentage of the population and the percentage of MPs, MEPs and other office holders with an immigrant background. This concerns all parties within the political spectrum, including the centre-right.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that having party candidates with realistic prospects of gaining responsible posts enhances the feeling of representation and mobilises immigrants and their descendants to vote. Political parties are well aware of this disproportionate situation, as mentioned in the introduction. The task now is to develop approaches to involve immigrants and their descendants in the political process. A helpful step in this direction could be to deploy monitoring tools that enable political parties to determine the migration background of their electorate, voters, party members and candidates.

Strategically, contributing to the political integration of immigrants would help distinguish the European centre-right from populist and extremist political alternatives. Following their anti-immigrant rhetoric would only alienate the traditional centre-right electorate and cost the mainstream centre-right some credibility. At the same time, centre-right values have to be reaffirmed.

The analysis presented here does not attempt an examination of the causes of the discrepancy between the proportion of immigrants in the population and in political life. This would require further research and a larger scope. Without further examination of this subject matter, one may only speculate that the following factors play a role in the under-representation of immigrants:



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- resistance to change on the part of mainstream parties,
- established ways of political recruitment,
- language problems,
- immigrants' insufficient knowledge of the political cultures of existing parties, and
- self-exclusion.⁵²

In future research, it may also be worth looking at political parties in the US, which, irrespective of their ideology, tend to compete for the votes of minority groups, including immigrant communities.⁵³

Policy recommendations

General

- Political parties in the EU should pay attention to the gradually increasing presence of immigrants from third countries and their descendants. From a democratic viewpoint, it is necessary to involve immigrants in the political process as voters, party members, candidates and office holders.
- National debates need to focus on the political rights of immigrants. Where rules prevent non-citizens from voting and running for office, alternatives to political participation could be explored, based, for example, on consultation with immigrant organisations. In any case, any exclusion of groups of people from the political process should be avoided.
- People with immigrant backgrounds are generally willing to go to the polls. It is therefore in political parties' self-interest that relevant party documents and election manifestos reflect the importance of immigrant voters and highlight issues relevant to them.

⁵² Personal interview with a member of the Christian Democratic and Flemish Party (a Belgian Christian democratic party), 12 September 2012.

⁵³ J. Bouie, 'The Democrats' Demographic Dreams', *The American Prospect*, 14 June 2012, accessed at <http://prospect.org/article/democrats-demographic-dreams> on 20 September 2012.



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Centre-right political strategy

- The European centre-right should clarify its message for people with a migration background through its election manifestos and public statements and reach out to immigrant communities through its campaign strategies. There is no reason to allow an appropriation of the immigrant vote by the left.
- Policies and practices should be adopted with a view to increasing the number of centre-right immigrant office holders at local, regional, national and European levels. This would demonstrate that centre-right parties represent the entire electorate.

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Centre for European Studies, Rue du Commerce 20, B-1000 Brussels
Layout design: RARO S.L.
Typesetting: Victoria Agency
Printed in Belgium by Drukkerij Jo Vandenbulcke

The Centre for European Studies (CES) is the political foundation of the European People's Party (EPP) dedicated to the promotion of Christian democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.
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This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.

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