

Chapter 2

Between Numbers and Political Drivers: What Matters in Policy-Making



Nicola Maggini

2.1 Introduction

Policy debate over immigration has intensified in a period characterised by global refugee crises and a wave of nationalist electoral victories. A body of literature has examined the reasons for the appeal of right-wing populist parties in Europe, highlighting the key role played by anti-immigrant attitudes and in general fears and concerns about immigration phenomena (Mudde 2011; Ivarsflaten 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). Indeed, migration is not a neutral issue from a political standpoint: scholars stress the importance of new cultural issues, such as migration, for the mobilisation of political conflicts (Flanagan and Lee 2003; Kriesi et al. 2006). Ivarsflaten (2008), using data collected in 2002–2003 to explain support for far-right parties in seven European countries, finds that anti-immigrant sentiment and a desire for tougher restrictions on immigration is the common and prevailing factor which has driven support for far-right parties, compared to other grievances such as dissatisfaction with the economy and distrust of politicians and/or the EU. Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) using the same data – this time across 11 countries – find that perceived cultural threat (i.e. the perception that immigration and cultural diversity pose a threat to the country’s way of life) is a stronger predictor of support for far-right parties than perceived economic threat (i.e. the perception that immigration poses a threat to jobs and the economy). These findings are consistent with the idea that immigration issues are part of a new cultural cleavage emerging because of globalisation and integration processes: the integration-demarcation cleavage using Kriesi et al.’s terminology (2006) or the transnational cleavage according to Hooghe and Marks (2018).

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19

The interplay between a multiplicity of factors makes immigration a relevant issue on the public agenda. Scholars have focused mainly on three different factors: citizens' attitudes to immigration and issue salience (Gilligan 2015); issue entrepreneurship by radical right parties or moderate centre-right parties (Van Spanje 2010; Hobolt and De Vries 2015); and socio-economic factors such as the unemployment rate, migration patterns and models of integration (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017; Van der Brug et al. 2015). The increasing politicisation of immigration issues is relevant to explain not only citizens' voting behaviour and party competition, but also policy outcomes. Although the restrictiveness of migration policies is driven by factors such as economic growth, unemployment and recent immigration levels (de Haas and Natter 2015), political factors are noteworthy explanatory variables, too (Abou-Chadi 2016). In particular, the rise of populist right-wing parties in recent years has strongly influenced immigration policies in two ways: on the one hand, populist right-wing parties have come to power (for example in Italy, Austria, Poland), on the other their electoral rise has influenced the positions and policies of mainstream parties (Van Spanje 2010; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018).

Therefore, the starting point of this chapter is the idea that the determinants of immigration policies and labour market integration policies concerning migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (MRAs) might include not only changes in economic conditions, but also shifts in power among political actors and the salience of issues on the political agenda (namely, perceptions about migration and immigrants).

This chapter aims to investigate whether policy measures on migration across seven European countries (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Switzerland and the UK) vary according to different political conditions at country level. It relies on the most recent data from both existing comparative datasets on public opinion (European Social Survey, Eurobarometer)¹ and a comparative database we built for the SIRIUS research,² which includes a systematic set of macro-level indicators spanning the time period 2010–2017. Thus, the chapter will compare and contrast the main features of the immigration and labour market integration policies for MRAs in the selected countries in light of both current data on MRAs stocks and flows in each national context, along with a number of indicators related to perceptions about migration and migrants and features of the political context (e.g. electoral strength of populist radical right parties, ideological configuration of political space).

As we will see in more detail in Chap. 3, in recent years the immigration policies of SIRIUS countries have been characterised by narrowing access to both international protection and legal entry for working reasons, although these countries are diverse in terms of socio-economic conditions, previous and current levels of MRAs and welfare state regimes. Hence, the hypothesis is that in recent years political

¹For the analysis in this chapter, we relied on the last available data. The latter vary between 2017 and 2019 depending on the indicators.

²Horizon 2020 research project coordinated by the Glasgow Caledonian University on the topic "Skills and Integration of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Applicants in European Labour Markets" (Grant Agreement n. 77051), <https://www.sirius-project.eu/>

factors are more relevant to explain the law and policy-making on immigration issues carried out in a similar fashion in such different European contexts, rather than the actual number of MRAs, their integration process or the effective European societies' demographic and economic needs, within each national context. More precisely, we hypothesise that if actual numbers of MRAs are still relatively low in the selected European countries despite the recent refugee crisis, then the adoption of restrictive policies on immigration can be better explained by political factors, listed as follows: prevalence of negative attitudes towards immigration among European citizens and salience of immigration issue; political relevance of populist radical-right parties who mostly mobilized on immigration issues and significant diffusion of their authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions within each country's party system. The underlying idea is that vote-maximising parties are conditioned by public attitudes on immigration and issue salience, which in turn are shaped by the political entrepreneurship of radical right parties or, at least, by moderate centre-right parties (Van Spanje 2010; Hobolt and De Vries 2015). In particular, the (eventual) spreading in European party systems of authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions (Hooghe and Marks 2018), which are strictly linked to the aforementioned new cultural cleavage between supporters of cultural demarcation and international integration (Kriesi et al. 2006), can be seen as a signal of the previously mentioned influence of populist-radical parties on the positions and immigration policies of mainstream parties (Van Spanje 2010; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018). This hypothesis is tested by contrasting legislative and policy measures on migration and integration issues with the numbers of MRAs in each national context, as well with the above-mentioned political features. Hence, the chapter is structured as follows: first, it provides a general picture of the legislative and policy measures on migration and integration issues carried out in the selected European countries. Secondly, it presents and discusses the numbers of MRAs in each national context. Thirdly, citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards immigration and salience of the immigration issue in each national context are analysed, along with the electoral strength of populist radical right parties and ideological configuration of the political space in terms of party positions on the cultural libertarian--authoritarian and economic left-right dimension. A concluding section follows.

2.2 Legislative and Policy Measures on Migration and Integration Issues

The results of integration policies should be seen in conjunction with the immigration policies that try to limit or encourage migration and manage migrants. Nevertheless, labour market integration policies and immigration policies are created with different goals in mind, and enforced by different sets of bureaucracies. Immigration policy is a widely used term, although often not clearly defined. Similar terms include migration regulation, control and restriction. A recent definition

describes immigration policy as: “government’s statements of what it intends to do or not do (including laws, regulations, decisions or orders) in regards to the selection, admission, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens residing in the country” (Bjerre et al. 2015: 559). Immigration policies therefore involve controlling borders, selecting new arrivals and maintaining national security, but cover also other areas including the labour market, integration, and humanitarian/asylum, family, co-ethnic, and irregular migration. Integration policies therefore are linked to immigration policies, but are more narrowly defined as “policies or programmes aimed at integrating immigrants into host society” (UN 2017). According to Goodman (2015: 12), integration policy is defined as *member-enabling*: “the state lowers itself to accommodate, promote, and alter the life changes of the immigrant”. Integration policies include: anti-discrimination, access to labour market, family reunification, political participation, education rights (Migration Policy Group 2011). Likewise, integration policies are classified by Schibel et al. (2002) according to the related functional domain: education, employment, housing, health or community development. A series of OECD publications (OECD 2007, 2008, 2012) focuses on the labour market integration of immigrants. In this regard, integration policies are involved with training, advising and matching employees with jobs that ideally take under consideration the interests of both the MRAs themselves to find work and of employers to find the needed employees (and governments, in making the welfare system sustainable from the point of view of public finances).

Despite being different, immigration and integration policies can influence each other, with, for instance, employers being prevented from recruiting the employees they need, or with asylum-seekers forced into inactivity while awaiting their asylum requests. In other words, it is clear that a tightening of immigration policies can both reduce the scope of integration policies (for instance, by reducing the number of allowed foreign workers or refugees, restricting family reunification, and so forth) and make them more difficult (for instance, this occurs when the procedures for renewing the permit to stay are complicated or when certain categories of migrants such as asylum seekers are not allowed to work).

2.2.1 Immigration Policies: Narrowing the Access and Limiting Legal Rights

As we will see in more detail in Chap. 3, in recent years, the immigration policies of SIRIUS countries have been characterised by narrowing the access to both international protection and legal entry for working reasons. Raising physical and legal barriers to foreigners’ entry went hand in hand with political discourses on migration, which tend to blend asylum seekers, economic migrants and irregular migrants. Reflecting narratives that question, for instance, the sincerity of asylum claims, restrictive asylum policies have been enacted. Furthermore, the restrictive trend is

further aggravated in the field of the economic migration, where the state power to select and control who can entry and stay is affirmed even more resolutely.

The narrowing of access is pursued through physical restrictions (migrant push-backs –either at the borders as all SIRIUS countries experienced or at the sea – as it is the case in Italy and Greece; increasing border controls – best exemplified by the Swiss case-; physical conditions on application lodging –for example since 2002 asylum seekers can only lodge an application on Danish soil), and, through procedural restrictions concerning reforms of both international protection procedures (hotspots, ‘safe third countries’, admissibility test, accelerated asylum procedures, suppression of levels of guarantees) and the reduction of the quota for foreign workers.

The restrictive domestic asylum proceedings have found a legal basis in the EU asylum *acquis*, in particular implementing procedures provided by the recast Asylum Procedures Directive.³ These legal and procedural devices, originally created with the goal of favouring greater efficiency in the management of migration and, particularly, in the refugee status determination process, in practice seem to also foster aims of containment and control of flows, resulting in curtailing access to the international procedure (Zetter 2007).

Moreover, as already discussed in Chap. 1, MRAs have also faced a legal marginalization in SIRIUS jurisdictions, namely as regards their right both to be legally recognised a status (and subsequently a permit to stay), and to have a number of other rights deriving from their status –*in primis* the right to work and the right to do it as nationals do.

2.2.2 *Labour Market Integration Policies: More Barriers Than Enablers*

Labour market integration policies in SIRIUS countries are characterised by more barriers than enablers (Bontenbal and Lillie 2019). Barriers to the labour market integration of migrants are similar across SIRIUS countries, and include ineffective administrative and legal structures, lack of recognition of skills and qualifications acquired in the home countries, lack of language skills, lack of needed skills and competences, lack of networks, labour exploitation, discrimination, a general atmosphere of xenophobia in society and (perceived) cultural barriers. The level of resources for integration programmes varies significantly across countries. This is due in part to the general level of resources dedicated to active labour market policies: if more resources are devoted to active labour market policy and social welfare generally, then there is more for MRAs as well. Hence, the national labour market

³Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast), OJ 2013 L180/60. The Directive recast Council Directive 2005/85/EC.

structure and the model of welfare regime play a role (Banting 2000). In this regard, Nekby (2008) concludes that the same types of activation labour market policies work for immigrants as for the general population of unemployed workers. Conversely, other scholars (Rinne 2013) conclude that interventions such as work experience and wage subsidy programmes seem most effective: “programs that are relatively closely linked to the labor market (for example, work experience and wage subsidies) appear the comparatively most effective programs” (Rinne 2013: 548). In Nordic countries, Ho and Shirono (2015) find that the estimated effects of active labour market programme spending are much higher on foreign-born unemployment than on native-born unemployment (although the latter is also reduced), so that the foreign-native gap is narrowed as a result. Furthermore, Nagayoshi and Hjerm (2015) discover that labour market policies in the form of activation policies affect attitudes toward immigration. Pro-immigration attitudes are more widespread in welfare states that introduce activation of labour market policies with a robust safety net, compared to welfare states that spend a large amount of the budget on passive labour market policies.

However, political climate plays a role as well, with cuts to programmes fostered by anti-immigrant politics. The importance of political factors is well exemplified by the different policies pursued by two countries with similar and generous welfare state regimes: Sweden and Denmark. According to Schierup et al. (2006), Sweden provides a generous welfare state to both its natives and immigrants, partly via the accessible process to get Swedish citizenship. Conversely, in Denmark access to welfare benefits is harder for immigrants compared to natives, and the employment rate remains lower for migrants than natives. The explanation is that migration policy has become a much more salient issue to gain votes in Denmark than in Sweden (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). This happened because “focusing on the immigration issue easily leads to a conflict with the centre-right, especially social liberal parties. In Sweden, such a conflict would undermine mainstream right-wing attempts at winning government power” (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 610). Conversely, the Danish People’s Party has – in its role as an indispensable coalition partner for a non-socialist government – been able to carry out much of its anti-immigration agenda, including the introduction of dualist welfare policies (Bay et al. 2013). In other words, party competition determines this difference.

Cross-country differences regard both the entitlement of specific migrant groups to participate in labour integration programmes and the availability of specific services. In some countries, such as in Finland and in Greece, programmes are offered to all job-seeking migrants. Conversely, in other countries, such as the Czech Republic and Denmark, they are mainly offered to newly arrived refugees. In the UK, programmes are only offered for resettled refugees, which have been chosen in collaboration with the UNHCR. There is also huge variation in the duration of integration programmes, which range between 5 years in the UK to a few courses lasting a few days in Switzerland (Bontenbal and Lillie 2019). In countries with well-structured integration training programmes, there is a pressure to shorten these, and include rapidly migrants and refugees into labour market, as exemplified by the Denmark’s relatively rigid ‘job first’. This may lead well-qualified migrants and

refugees to accept unqualified positions, with the risk of wasting human capital in the long term. Finally, the long processing time of the asylum applications and the enforced inactivity of the application period – in a number of jurisdictions asylum applicants do not have the right to work – is a problem, both for the integration into the labour market of asylum seekers with good chances of having their applications accepted, and from the perspective of public finances.

2.3 Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Applicants: The Numbers

So far, we have seen how policies are characterised by many barriers to the integration of MRAs into the labour market. Chapter 3 shows how immigration laws and policies in the analysed countries have had a restrictive turn in recent years. Is this restrictive legal and policy framework ‘justified’ by the real numbers related to the stock and flows of MRAs in European countries? On the one hand, it is true that during the 2000–2017 period, the international migrant stock grew worldwide by an average of 2.3%. In absolute values, it means that since 2000 the estimated number of international migrants has been constantly increasing in the whole planet, reaching 258 million in 2017. On the other hand, the share of international migrants in proportion to the world’s population has remained relatively stable in the last four decades, fluctuating from 2.2 to 3.5% (UN 2017). International migrations show different patterns: the share of migrants residing in high-income countries increased from 9.6% in 2000 to 14% in 2017, and high-income countries host 64% of the total number of international migrants worldwide, but the picture reverses if we consider solely refugees and asylum seekers. They are about 26 million, representing slightly more than 10% of the total migrant population. Eighty-four per cent of them are hosted in low and middle-income countries (UN 2017). Therefore, high-income and low and middle-income countries face different challenges in migration management. In the present volume, the focus is on the first group, but keeping in mind that this is just a partial perspective on a broader, much more complex and diverse phenomenon.

The recent increase of the migrant population affected especially people of working age: in 2017, about 74% of all international migrants were between 20 and 64 years of age, compared to 57% of the global population falling in the same age group. This means that, in principle, a net inflow of migrants decreases the proportion of inactive population (children and elderly people), with positive effects for the host country’s economy and welfare. In particular, scholars have highlighted how migrants in the working age, being net contributors to public finances, will be fundamental in sustaining fiscal revenues, needed to maintain publicly funded pension schemes in a context characterised by ageing population (Storesletten 2003). Relying on generational accounting approaches, several studies find net fiscal gains from immigrants in different European countries, for instance in Spain (Collado

Population change by component (annual crude rates), EU-28, 1960-2018
(per 1 000 persons)

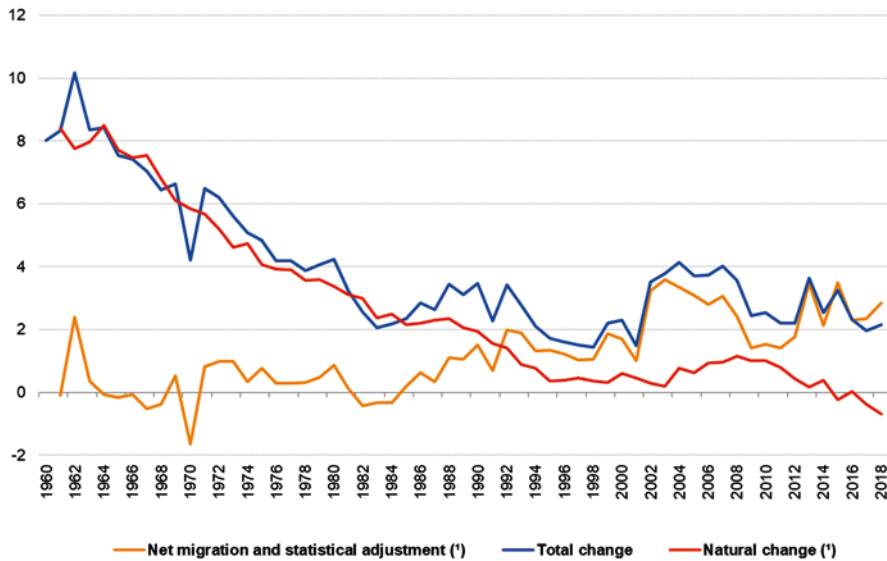


Fig. 2.1 Population change by component (annual crude rates) in the EU, 1960–2018 (per 1000 persons). (Source: Eurostat)

et al. 2004), in France (Chojnicki 2013), in Austria (Mayr 2005) and, especially as regards high-skilled immigrants, in the UK (Lee and Miller 2000) and in Sweden (Storesletten 2003).

Narrowing the analysis to Europe, we should highlight that there were 17.6 million persons living in one of the EU Member States on 1 January 2018 with the citizenship of another EU Member State, whereas third-country nationals residing in an EU Member State amounted to 22.4 million, equal to 4.4% of the population of the EU-28 (Eurostat 2019).⁴ In terms of flows, 4.4 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 Member States during 2017, including flows between EU Member States. Among these 4.4 million immigrants, people of non-EU countries amounted to 2.0 million, EU citizens amounted to 2.3 million and stateless people were around 11 thousand. These are not particularly high numbers, considering that the EU population is over 500 million people.

Moreover, in recent years, immigration has contributed to EU population change. This is indeed determined by two components: the natural population change – specifically the difference between the number of live births and deaths in a given year – and the net migration – precisely the difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants. As reported by Fig. 2.1, since the mid-1980s

⁴For sake of comparability, it has been decided to use Eurostat data in this section.

Table 2.1 Total number of immigrants in SIRIUS countries, 2013–2017 (thousands)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Czech Republic	30,124	29,897	29,602	64,083	51,847
Denmark	60,312	68,388	78,492	74,383	68,579
Greece	57,946	59,013	64,446	116,867	112,247
Italy	307,454	277,631	280,078	300,823	343,440
Finland	31,941	31,507	28,746	34,905	31,797
United Kingdom	526,046	631,991	631,452	588,993	644,209
Switzerland	160,157	156,282	153,627	149,305	143,377

Source: Eurostat

net migration has increased, and from the beginning of the 1990s onwards the value of net migration and statistical adjustment has always been higher than that of natural change. Between 2016 and 2018, the net migration change (plus statistical adjustment) was even higher than the total change. Conversely, since the mid-1980s the natural change in the population decreased: the number of deaths increased, the number of live births decreased. The difference between live births and deaths narrowed significantly from 1961 onwards and deaths outnumbered live births in 2015, 2017 and 2018 resulting in a natural decrease in the population. The increase in population recorded between 2016 and 2018 was therefore due to net migration and statistical adjustment. Migration is thus fundamental to explain population change in the EU and during the past three decades population growth have been mainly driven by net migration. This trend is likely to persist in the future, given that the number of deaths is expected to increase because of the aging of the baby-boom generation.

If we look at immigration flows both from outside the EU and between EU countries, in 2017 a total of around 1.4 million people immigrated to one of the SIRIUS countries, with UK reporting the largest amount (644,209) and Finland the smallest (31,797) (Table 2.1).

Among the 1.4 million who migrated to one of the selected European countries in 2017, almost one million people (731,196) were from a non-EU country, with a constant increase over time. Again, the UK reports the largest number of non-EU immigrants (320,669), whereas Finland shows the smallest number (16,480) (Table 2.2). As regards migration stocks (Table 2.3), overall, more than eight million non-EU nationals live in one of the SIRIUS countries in 2018 (1.6% of total EU population), 221,911 more than in 2014. The largest number is recorded in Italy (3,581,561), whereas among SIRIUS countries Finland hosts the smallest number (148,491).

If we look at the share of non-nationals in the resident population of 1 January 2018 (see Fig. 2.2), Switzerland shows the highest share of non-nationals (25.1%), whereas Finland and the Czech Republic show the lowest shares (4.5% and 4.9%, respectively). The UK, Italy, Denmark and (to a lesser extent) Greece show very similar percentages (between 9% and 7.6%). However, if took into account only non-EU foreigners, the percentage in Switzerland drops, although it is still the highest among the SIRIUS countries (8.6%). Moreover, shares of non-EU foreigners in

Table 2.2 Number of non-EU arrivals in SIRIUS countries, 2013–2017 (migration flows in thousands)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Czech Republic	10,780	9386	10,619	29,902	30,725
Denmark	19,624	24,482	32,256	28,559	23,054
Greece	16,313	13,539	17,492	69,497	63,324
Italy	201,536	180,271	186,522	200,217	239,953
Finland	13,183	13,568	13,108	19,638	16,480
United Kingdom	248,464	287,136	278,587	265,390	320,669
Switzerland	37,247	35,713	37,382	37,585	36,991

Source: Eurostat

Table 2.3 Number of non-EU nationals living in SIRIUS countries, 2014–2018 (migration stocks in thousands)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Czech Republic	261,302	272,993	280,907	302,579	296,072
Denmark	233,023	244,380	267,192	274,990	284,537
Greece	662,335	623,246	591,693	604,813	604,904
Italy	3,479,566	3,521,825	3,508,429	3,509,089	3,581,561
Finland	121,882	127,792	133,136	143,757	148,491
United Kingdom	2,425,012	2,434,209	2,436,046	2,444,555	2,425,737
Switzerland	663,337	674,074	689,304	716,052	727,066

Source: Eurostat

Italy (5.9%) and Greece (5.6%) are higher than in UK (3.7%). Overall, however, non-EU nationals represents less than 10% of the resident population in each of the SIRIUS countries, contrary to the narrative about an ‘invasion’ of Europe. Many far-right parties in the last years have indeed campaigned showing ads like “stop the invasion!” or “secure our borders!”⁵ However, as shown by the numbers we have presented so far and by previous empirical research (De Haas 2008), the reality is different.

Concerning the permits to stay – namely those authorisations issued by a country’s authorities allowing non-EU nationals to legally stay on its territory – Table 2.4 clusters them by reason for issue. In 2017, slightly more than 3.1 million permits were released. The majority were issued for employment reasons (1.01 million; 32.2%) followed by family reasons (829,922; 26.5%), other reasons (766,798; 24.5%) – that include stays without the right to work or international protection – and education-related reasons (529,994; 16.9%). Therefore, Europe, despite the

⁵ See <https://www.euronews.com/2018/03/28/hungary-government-s-new-anti-immigration-ad-copies-ukip-s-controversial-anti-migrant-post>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/27/world/europe/europe-migrant-crisis-change.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/10/world/europe/sweden-immigration-nationalism.html>

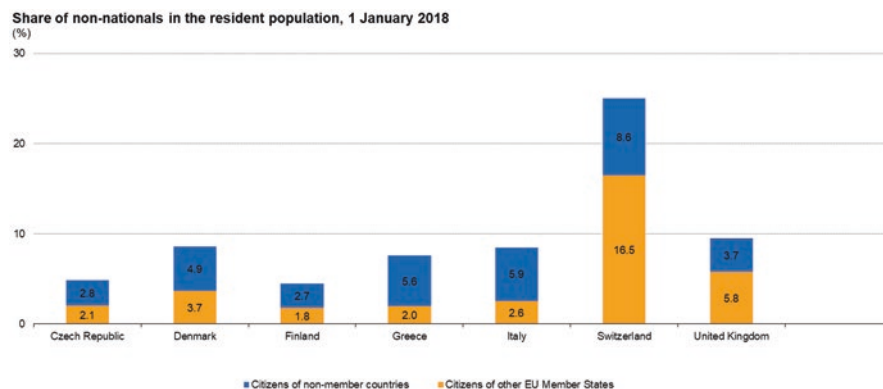


Fig. 2.2 Share of non-nationals in the resident population, 1 January 2018 (%). (Source: Eurostat)

Table 2.4 First residence permits issued by reason, 2013–2017 (thousands)

	Family	Education	Employment	Other	Total
2013	671,572	463,943	534,214	686,722	2,356,451
2014	680,388	476,845	573,321	595,423	2,325,977
2015	760,231	525,858	707,632	628,301	2,622,022
2016	780,429	499,775	854,715	889,622	3,024,541
2017	829,922	529,994	1,009,427	766,798	3,136,141

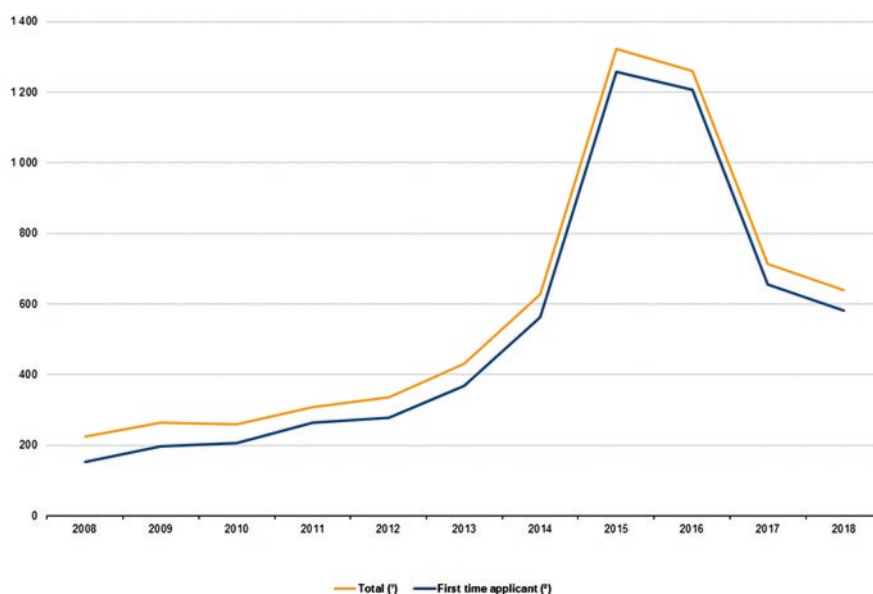
Source: Eurostat

recent economic crisis, continues to exercise a great pulling factor because of its ability to absorb work.

As far as statistics on asylum are concerned, the total number of asylum applications in the EU from non-EU nationals amounts to 638,240 in 2018, approximately half the number registered in 2015 and 2016, when applications amounted to 1,322,845 and 1,260,910 respectively (Fig. 2.3). Therefore, asylum applications reached their peaks in 2015 and 2016, when the EU witnessed an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants, most of them fleeing from war in Syria. Considering the nationality of asylum applicants in 2018 (Eurostat 2019), most arrived from contexts affected by years of generalized violence, insecurity, authoritarian regimes, etc. (e.g., the first six countries of origin are, in descending order, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria). This suggests that they will probably not come back soon. Therefore, it becomes appropriate to draw up strategies for their active integration into the labour market.

In the 2013–2018 period, the highest number of first instance decisions was issued in 2016 (1,106,395) (see Table 2.5). Out of the total number of decisions issued, 672,890 (61%) had a positive outcome. Furthermore, 366,470 (54%) positive decisions granted refugee status; 50,980 (8%) granted an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons; and 255,440 (38%) decided for subsidiary protection. It is worth mentioning that humanitarian status is specific to national legislations,

Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2008–2018
(thousands)



(*) 2008 - 2014: Croatia not available.

(*) 2008: Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Finland not available. 2009: Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Finland not available. 2010: Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania and Finland not available.

2011: Croatia, Hungary, Austria and Finland not available. 2012: Croatia, Hungary and Austria not available. 2013: Austria not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_asyppecta)

Fig. 2.3 Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU, 2008–2018 (thousands). (Source: Eurostat)

Table 2.5 First instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2013–2018 (thousands)

	Refugee status	Humanitarian status	Subsidiarity protection status	Total positive	Rejected	Total
2013	49,670	12,505	45,435	107,610	206,625	314,235
2014	95,380	15,710	56,295	167,385	199,470	366,850
2015	229,460	23,290	54,900	307,650	289,005	596,655
2016	366,470	50,980	255,440	672,890	433,505	1,106,395
2017	218,560	63,650	155,345	437,555	524,055	961,610
2018	122,070	33,435	61,900	217,405	364,325	581,735

Source: Eurostat

contrary to refugee status and subsidiary protection status which are defined by EU law. As for 2018, the total number of first instance decisions dropped to 581,735. Out of these decisions, 217,405 (37%) were positive, of which 122,070 (56%) granted refugee status.

As regards final decisions (i.e. those decisions taken by administrative or judicial bodies in appeal or in review and which are no longer subject to remedy), in 2018, 308,830 decisions were issued, of which 115,925 (38%) were positive (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Final decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2013–2018 (thousands)

	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection status	Humanitarian status	Total positive	Rejected	Total
2013	14,845	5350	4480	24,675	109,965	134,640
2014	15,990	5415	4795	26,195	109,835	136,030
2015	18,110	4640	3650	26,400	152,900	179,300
2016	23,660	8275	10,700	42,630	188,355	230,985
2017	49,590	31,140	14,580	95,310	186,235	281,545
2018	41,720	38,410	35,800	115,925	192,905	308,830

Source: Eurostat

Table 2.7 International protections applications: success rate of all forms of international protection and success rate of refugee status in 2018 (first instance decisions)

	Number of applications	Decisions granting any form of international protection		Decisions granting the refugee status	
		Positive decisions	Success rate	Positive decisions	Success rate
Czech Republic	1385	155	11.2%	40	2.9%
Denmark	2625	1315	50.1%	825	31.4%
Finland	4440	2405	54.2%	1765	39.8%
Greece	32,340	15,210	47.0%	12,635	39.1%
Italy	95,210	30,670	32.2%	6490	6.8%
Switzerland	17,000	15,225	89.6%	6190	36.4%
UK	28,860	10,100	35.0%	7650	26.5%

Source: own calculations on Eurostat data

In particular, 41,720 (36%) resulted in grants of refugee status, 35,800 (31%) granted humanitarian status, and 38,410 (33%) granted subsidiary protection.

It is interesting to focus on 2018 data to highlight the success rate of international protection applications in SIRIUS countries, focusing on first instance decisions. Table 2.7 shows, on the left side, the total number of positive decisions about all international protection applications (including Geneva convention status, humanitarian status, subsidiary protection status) and their success rate; on the right side of the table positive decisions granting only the Geneva convention status (i.e. refugee status) and the related success rate are reported. As regards decisions granting any type of international protection, Switzerland is by far the country with the highest success rate (89.6%), followed by Finland (54.2%) and Denmark (50.1%). Conversely, the lowest success rate is definitely the Czech Republic (11.2%). Relatively lower rates also characterise Italy (32.2%) and the UK (35%). Greece lies in between (47%). People applying in Switzerland and in the Czech Republic might have different characteristics and different life paths, but such a wide gap in the success rate is likely to also depend on different legal provisions and the interpretation of protection standards (for more details on this, see Chap. 3).

Differences among SIRIUS countries become even wider when taking into account only the positive decisions granting refugee status and not considering other forms of protection, as shown by the right side of Table 2.7. Figures drop dramatically and vary from 39.8% in Finland and 39.1% in Greece to 2.9% in the Czech Republic. The country where the difference is minimal is Greece, whereas the maximum difference is in Switzerland. This means that in Greece the overwhelmingly majority of positive decisions granted refugee status, whereas in Switzerland other forms of international protection prevailed. Indeed, other Eurostat data⁶ show that in Greece national forms of temporary protection are minimal, whereas in Switzerland refugee status is granted less than humanitarian protection (and even less considering also subsidiary protection). The second largest difference between success rate of any form of international protection and refugee status' success rate is shown by Italy, signalling that in 2018 other forms of international protection prevailed over refugee status. In particular, according to Eurostat data,⁷ humanitarian protection status was by far the most granted form of protection.⁸ In the other countries, there is a greater balance between decisions that guarantee refugee status and those that guarantee other forms of international protection, with a prevalence of the refugee status protection in UK, Finland and Denmark and a prevalence of the other forms of international protection (especially subsidiary protection)⁹ in the Czech Republic. Clearly, not all statuses are entitled to the same rights and benefits, as shown by Chaps. 1 and 3. Differences may be significant, with a relevant impact on people's lives. In general, these data confirm the restrictive turn discussed in previous section.

The data we have presented so far denies once again the rhetoric of 'the invasion'. All the countries we analyzed are selective and rigid in granting international protection. Of course, a different discourse can be created about the fate of people who are denied status. Many of them, indeed, are ordered to leave the country, but few are actually repatriated and become illegal, with all the negative consequences that this fact can have for migrants themselves and host countries. This is the real problem that EU countries are not able to solve, and it has shown by statistics on the enforcement of immigration legislation presented in Table 2.8. On the one hand, the number of non-EU citizens who were refused entry into the EU, after a decline in 2014, increased between 2014 and 2018, reaching its peaks in 2017 and 2018 (439,505 and 471,155, respectively), confirming again the increasingly restrictive approach adopted by most EU governments. On the other, the highest number of non-EU citizens found to be illegally present was recorded in 2015 (2,154,675). In

⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/f/f7/Asylum_statistics_YB19_10_05_2019.xlsx

⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/f/f7/Asylum_statistics_YB19_10_05_2019.xlsx

⁸ These data are clearly destined to change radically in the near future because the recent decree n. 113/2018 (the so-called Salvini decree) has abolished humanitarian protection.

⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/f/f7/Asylum_statistics_YB19_10_05_2019.xlsx

Table 2.8 Non-EU citizens subject to the enforcement of immigration legislation, 2013–2018 (thousands)

	Refused entry	Illegally present	Ordered to leave	Returned to a non-EU country
2013	326,320	452,270	430,450	184,765
2014	286,805	672,215	470,080	170,415
2015	297,860	2,154,675	533,395	196,190
2016	388,280	983,860	493,790	228,995
2017	439,505	618,775	516,115	189,855
2018	471,155	601,500	478,155	157,895

Source: Eurostat

the same year, not surprisingly, it was registered the highest number of non-EU nationals who were ordered to leave the territory of one of the EU countries (533,395), but only slightly more than one fifth of them (196,190 third country nationals) were returned to their country of origin outside the EU. In 2016, this number increased to 228,995 non-EU citizens, whereas in the following years this number decreased, thus signalling how the increasingly restrictive immigration measures have not gone hand in hand with the capacity to effectively implement repatriations. Over time, indeed, those who are returned to a non-EU country are only a small share of those ordered to leave. This means that the tightening of immigration policies did not impede the presence of ‘illegal’ migrants within EU countries, despite ‘fighting illegal immigration’ being often the declared purpose of many governments. On the contrary, a restrictive approach can be seen as one of the causes of illegal entry: restricting legal entry may have prompted many immigrants to apply for asylum as the only legal access route, but many have been denied international protection, actually making them illegal. In this regard, scholars have talked about implementation gap and efficacy gap (Czaika and De Haas 2013). As regards the first, research has revealed that implementation gaps can be significant (e.g. Wunderlich 2010), especially when immigration policies on paper are unrealistic or not related to concrete migration experiences. The efficacy gap reflects the fact that efforts by states to regulate and restrict immigration have often failed (Bhagwati 2003; Castles 2004; Düvell 2005) because of unintended effects, for instance on other migration flows: rather than having an impact on the overall volume of inflows, immigration restrictions would mostly change the channel of access of immigrants, such as through an increased use of family migration or irregular means of entry. De Haas (2011) calls this reorientation toward other legal or illegal channels of immigration the *categorical substitution effect*. The low effectiveness of restrictive immigration policies is explained by structural determinants in origin and destination countries (such as labour market imbalances) as well as by the internal dynamics of migration networks and systems (Czaika and De Haas 2013). This explains why (illegal) migration often does not stop despite the tightening of borders control.

2.4 Citizens' Attitudes and Political Context

The demographic data presented so far show that MRAs stocks and flows are relatively low – apart from the 2015/16 refugee flow's peak (which in any case involved a few million people out of a European population of 550 million) – and do not justify the worsening of political discourse and the consequent exacerbation of the norms and of the policies. Against these numbers, therefore, it is worth looking at other data to analyse and comprehend the legislative and policy measures undertaken by public authorities of SIRIUS countries in recent years. In particular, in order to test our hypothesis that legislative and policy measures on immigration are mainly driven by political factors rather than by the numbers of immigration flows and stocks, it is important to investigate citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards immigration and the main features of the political context (electoral strength of the radical right, mean distribution of parties along the relevant dimensions of the political space) in which policy-makers have adopted their decisions. In recent years, in fact, immigration has been placed at the centre of the public agenda by political entrepreneurs who use it for electoral purposes: in this regard, scholars have stressed the relevance of new cultural issues such as migration for the mobilisation of political conflicts (Flanagan and Lee 2003; Kriesi et al. 2006) and for the success of right-wing populist parties (Mudde 2011). Before analysing the main indicators of the political context that may have influenced policy measures on immigration, it is important to look first at the configuration of public opinion relying on available survey data. These data deal with both perceptions concerning immigration and salience of the immigration issue. The idea, indeed, is that the magnitude of anti-immigration attitudes and the perceived salience of the issue are both elements that can lead political entrepreneurs to strategically emphasise this issue during the electoral campaigns with potentially rewarding results in electoral terms, as highlighted in previous studies (Emanuele et al. 2019). Furthermore, public opinion data are important not only to understand party competition and electoral results, but also public policy. Indeed, the effect of public opinion on public policy is contingent on public issue salience: salience enhances the impact of public opinion (Burstein 2003).

We start with European citizens' perceptions of inflows of foreign population as a positive or negative social factor. In particular, we have analysed the feelings of citizens from SIRIUS EU countries towards the immigration of non-EU people in the 2014–2019 time span according to Eurobarometer surveys (Switzerland data are unfortunately missing). If we look at the last available data (June 2019),¹⁰ the most remarkable result is that positive attitudes prevail over negative ones only in the UK (57% vs. 32%, see Fig. 2.4), whereas in all other countries negative perceptions are more widespread, with the Czech Republic showing the most negative attitudes (82%, see Fig. 2.5). If we consider trends over time, we can notice that negative feelings about immigration are rather stable over recent years. In general, we

¹⁰ See <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/59/groupKy/279>

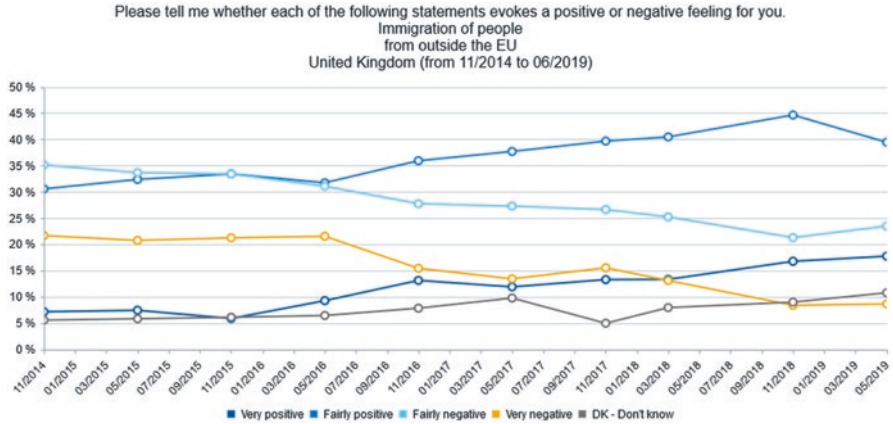


Fig. 2.4 Citizens’ feelings about immigration of people outside the EU. (Source: Eurobarometer 87)

observe a common increase of very negative feelings in 2015, namely during the so-called refugee crisis. This pattern characterises (almost) all the analysed countries,¹¹ with some nuances: in Greece the highest increase occurred in 2018 (reaching the same high level of fairly negative attitudes), in Italy negative feelings are quite stable over time (with a decrease of very negative feelings after 2016 and especially after 2018, counterbalanced by an increase of fairly negative feelings). The UK, again, is the exception: since 2016, both kinds of negative attitudes have decreased (with a slight increase in 2019), whereas positive attitudes have increased, overcoming the previous ones (see Fig. 2.4).

These findings are confirmed if we analyse other attitudes towards immigrants/immigration retrieved from the SIRIUS dataset, which includes data from Standard Eurobarometer and European Social Survey (see Table 2.9). Relevant shares of European citizens think that immigrants make their country a worse place to live¹²: in each country, at least around 20–25% of citizens share this opinion between 2010 and 2016, with a 75.2% peak in Greece in 2010. The Czech Republic and Italy are the countries that show the highest increase of such a negative perception of immigrants over time: in the latter, this negative attitude moved from 43.1% of 2012 to 59% of 2016, whereas in the former the percentage declined from 54.3% in 2010 to 50.4% in 2012 and then constantly increased reaching the peak of 60.6% in 2016. Conversely, the UK is the country facing the highest decrease in this negative perception, moving from 43.8% in 2010 to 29.2% in 2016. Similar results can be noticed if we examine the share of respondents who believe that own country’s

¹¹ See <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/chartType/lineChart/themeKy/59/groupKy/279/savFile/911>

¹²“Immigrants make country worse or better place to live”: percentage of respondents who take positions from 0 to 4 on a 0–10 scale where 0 means “worse place to live” and 10 “better place to live”.

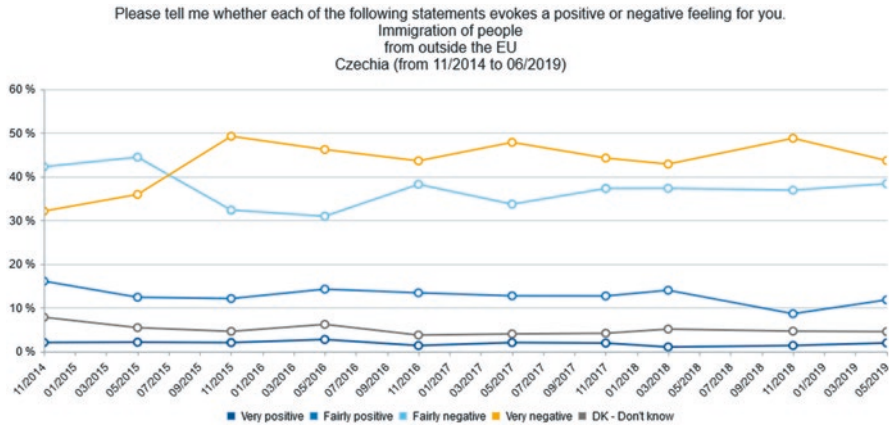


Fig. 2.5 Citizens’ feelings about immigration of people outside the EU). (Source: Eurobarometer)

cultural life is undermined by immigrants¹³ and that immigration is bad for the economy.¹⁴ In Denmark and in Finland, concerns that the economy is being jeopardized by immigrants are higher than the perceived cultural damages that could come from incorporating more newcomers, while in the remaining countries culture--based fears prevail over economic ones. Probably, in the two Nordic countries, this result might be explained by citizens’ fear that the traditional welfare state model which underpins their societies could be jeopardized by the arrival of foreigners. Already in the late 1980s, Freeman (1986) highlighted the difficult relationship between generous welfare policies and immigration. More recently, Alesina and Glaeser (2004) have argued that the increasing arrivals of ethnically distinct, poor immigrants within society characterised by high social spending and ethnic and racial homogeneity has favoured the rise of an anti-immigrant rhetoric with potential negative consequences also on redistributive policies. Conversely, Bay et al. (2013) have found that in Norway and Denmark the widespread perception that immigrants are less committed to work than the majority population is positively correlated with preferences for redistribution, although support is for welfare dualism. Other studies have shown how generous welfare spending tends to strengthen support for restrictive immigration policies (Faist 1996).

Despite the cross-country differences in terms of strength and trends of negative attitudes towards both immigration and immigrants, the salience, or ‘perceived

¹³“Country’s cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants”: percentage of respondents who take positions from 0 to 4 on a 0–10 scale where 0 means “cultural life is undermined” and 10 “cultural life enriched”.

¹⁴“Immigration bad or good for country’s economy”: percentage of respondents who take positions from 0 to 4 on a 0–10 scale where 0 means “bad for the economy” and 10 “good for the economy”.

Table 2.9 Citizens' attitudes toward immigration/immigrants by country over time

Country	Year	Immigration salience	Immigrants make country worse	Cultural life undermined by immigrants	Immigration bad for the economy
Czech Republic	2010	12.7	54.3	53.5	56.46
	2011	11.9	.	.	.
	2012	7.9	50.4	49.4	53.19
	2013	11.7	.	.	.
	2014	21.3	58.0	56.3	62.05
	2015	43.9	.	.	.
	2016	67.0	60.6	63.1	52.17
	2017	53.6	.	.	.
Denmark	2010	14.6	20.4	21.8	31.66
	2011	26.4	.	.	.
	2012	8.6	18.6	21.8	34.38
	2013	7.9	.	.	.
	2014	20.6	23.3	27.1	35.59
	2015	49.7	.	.	.
	2016	71.2	.	.	.
	2017	55.6	.	.	.
Finland	2010	12.8	25.8	10.1	32.35
	2011	12.7	.	.	.
	2012	9.9	21.9	7.1	28.39
	2013	7.2	.	.	.
	2014	14.9	24.1	11.6	32.05
	2015	24.1	.	.	.
	2016	47.7	23.7	10.6	28.65
	2017	33.3	.	.	.
Greece	2010	9.7	75.2	68.1	68.76
	2011	15.2	.	.	.
	2012	10.9	.	.	.
	2013	10.1	.	.	.
	2014	18.1	.	.	.
	2015	26.6	.	.	.
	2016	40.5	.	.	.
	2017	32.4	.	.	.
Italy	2010	14.8	.	.	.
	2011	27.2	.	.	.
	2012	5.3	43.1	29.4	33.65
	2013	6.6	.	.	.
	2014	24.8	.	.	.
	2015	43.3	.	.	.
	2016	43.8	59.0	46.4	48.57
	2017	40.4	.	.	.

(continued)

Table 2.9 (continued)

Country	Year	Immigration salience	Immigrants make country worse	Cultural life undermined by immigrants	Immigration bad for the economy
Switzerland	2010	.	22.2	23.3	16.86
	2011	.	.	.	.
	2012	.	24.5	21.9	18.36
	2013	.	.	.	.
	2014	.	24.4	23.9	18.23
	2015	.	.	.	.
	2016	.	21.8	22.8	19.92
	2017	.	.	.	.
United Kingdom	2010	18.6	43.8	40.9	44.35
	2011	23.8	.	.	.
	2012	11.5	42.8	37.9	45.5
	2013	19.4	.	.	.
	2014	29.2	41.3	40.3	38.58
	2015	36.0	.	.	.
	2016	51.3	29.2	28.5	24.7
	2017	36.8	.	.	.

Source: SIRIUS WP 2 Dataset (including Standard Eurobarometer, European Social Survey)

importance',¹⁵ of immigration as a policy matter is a common feature in all SIRIUS countries (data for Switzerland in this case are not available). Indeed, Table 2.9 shows that the saliency of immigration has experienced a sharp uptick after 2013, reaching a peak in all countries in 2016, when it was the most important issue for 67% of Czechs, 71.2% of Danes, 47.7% of Finns, 40.5% of Greeks, 43.8% of Italians and 51.3% of Britons. In 2017, in all countries there has been a decline in the perceived importance of the immigration issue, albeit continuing to be salient for relevant shares of respondents (ranging from a minimum of 32.4% in Greece to a maximum of 55.6% in Denmark).

As previously mentioned, data about the saliency of the issue are important because they can have a significant effect on electoral behaviour: when voters perceive immigration as highly prominent, those with pre-existing, latent, anti-immigration attitudes are more likely to switch their vote to populist radical right parties than when economic issues are considered more important (Dennison and Geddes 2018). To sum up, the data presented so far show that public opinion in SIRIUS countries represents a strong constraint for immigration policies: in fact, the immigration issue is very salient and negative attitudes towards immigration prevail over positive ones. Moreover, these are all aspects that favour the parties of the radical populist right (Ivarsflaten 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). Indeed, as

¹⁵ Percentage of the population that picked immigration as the most important issue facing the EU at the moment ("don't know" answers included).

shown in Table 2.10, the electoral strength of populist radical right parties¹⁶ (Mudde 2011) has increased over time, although with different trends and levels among SIRIUS countries. The maximum of electoral strength of such populist parties has been reached in some countries during the so-called refugee crisis, with a decline in the following years. This is the case in Denmark (26.6% of votes in the 2014 European Parliament elections and 21.1% in the 2015 national parliamentary elections) and Greece (20.5% and 16.0% in the two close national elections occurred in 2012 and 15.6% in the 2014 European Parliament elections). Other countries, conversely, show a trendless fluctuation: in Finland, the highest percentages of votes for populist parties were obtained in the national parliamentary elections of 2011 (19.1%), 2015 (17.7%) and 2019 (17.5%), whereas in UK the two peaks occurred in the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament elections (27.5% and 33.7%, respectively).¹⁷ In Switzerland the share of the populist right has substantially remained stable around 30% over time, whereas in the Czech Republic, where populist radical right parties were irrelevant in 2010, they reached the 12.2% of votes in the 2017 national parliamentary elections. Finally, the most remarkable increase occurred in Italy, where the populist radical right moved from 6.1% of votes in the 2013 national election to 40.7% in the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Despite the above-mentioned cross-country differences in terms of right-wing populist electoral strength, it is a matter of fact that these parties are relevant political actors, which shape the public debate on immigration issues and influence decisions of policy makers and mainstream parties (Van Spanje 2010; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018) or even adopt such decisions when in government, as best exemplified by the League of Matteo Salvini in Italy. Indeed, on the one hand such parties follow and represent opinions (and fears) about immigration that are widespread among European citizens over recent years. On the other hand, they actively contribute to form and spread such opinions: partisan mobilisation is fundamental for the politicisation of immigration issues (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017).

As previously mentioned, immigration issues are part of a new cultural cleavage opposing the winners and the losers of globalisation and integration processes: the so-called integration-demarcation cleavage according to Kriesi et al. (2006) or the transnational cleavage according to Hooghe and Marks (2018). This cleavage has not replaced the worker/employer cleavage, but cuts across the left-right divide (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2006). Furthermore, concerns for group identity and diversity in an increasingly multicultural world are strictly connected to

¹⁶We calculated the electoral strength by summing the vote shares obtained in the elections for the national and European Parliament in the 2010–2019 time span by the parties that can be classified as populist radical right parties as defined by Mudde (2011). In Greece, Golden Dawn was also included for its electoral relevance, despite being a neo-fascist party rather than a populist party. We included only parties that obtained seats in at least one of the elections considered.

¹⁷The better performance of the populist radical right in European Parliament elections compared to national elections can be explained by the fact that a proportional representation electoral system is used for European Parliament elections, whereas in national elections a single-member district plurality electoral system is used.

Table 2.10 Political indicators by country over time

Country	Year	PRR electoral strength	GAL-TAN	Economic left-right
Czech Republic	2010	0.7%	5.0	5.1
	2013	9.3%	.	.
	2014	8.4%	5.4	5.5
	2017	12.2%	5.9	5.2
	2019	9.8%	.	.
Denmark	2010		4.5	5.1
	2011	12.3%	.	.
	2014	26.6%	4.3	4.8
	2015	21.1%	.	.
	2019	10.8% ^b	.	.
	11.1% ^a			
Finland	2010		5.1	4.9
	2011	19.1%	.	.
	2014	12.9%	4.7	5.0
	2015	17.7%	.	.
	2019	17.5% ^a	.	.
	13.8% ^b			
Greece	2010		5.0	3.4
	2012	20.5% ^c	.	.
		16.0% ^d		
	2014	15.6%	5.6	4.1
	2015	12.1% ^e	.	.
		10.7% ^f		
	2017		5.4	4.9
2019	11.1% ^a	.	.	
	6.6% ^b			
Italy	2010		4.2	3.9
	2013	6.1%	.	.
	2014	9.9%	5.6	4.8
	2017		5.6	4.6
	2018	21.8%	.	.
	2019	40.7%	.	.
Switzerland	2010		5.4	5.1
	2011	27.8%	.	.
	2014		5.7	5.2
	2015	30.7%	.	.

(continued)

Table 2.10 (continued)

Country	Year	PRR electoral strength	GAL-TAN	Economic left-right
United Kingdom	2010	3.7%	4.8	4.8
	2014	27.5%	4.5	4.9
	2015	13.2%	.	.
	2016		.	.
	2017	2.7%	4.4	4.4
	2019	33.7%	.	.

Note: PRR populist radical right

Source: SIRIUS WP 2 Dataset (including Comparative Political Dataset 1965–2015, ParlGov and own calculations based on Chapel Hill Expert Survey), own calculations based on official electoral results

^aNational parliamentary election

^bEuropean parliament election

^cNational parliamentary election of May 2012

^dNational parliamentary election of June 2012

^eNational parliamentary election of January 2015

^fNational parliamentary election of September 2015

a larger cultural conflict (Beramendi et al. 2015; Hooghe and Marks 2018) between libertarian and authoritarian values (Kitschelt 1994). Indeed, scholars analysing the ideological positions of public opinion detect a bi-dimensional structure of the political space (see Grasso and Giugni 2018). One dimension is linked to issues of economic equality, which separates pro-economic redistribution positions from positions in favour of laissez-faire economics (the traditional economic left–right distinction). The other dimension relates to issues of cultural diversity and social order, based on the opposition between authoritarian and libertarian positions (Kitschelt 1994). These two dimensions are relevant not only in terms of citizens’ positions on policy issues, but also in terms of party positions. Restrictive positions on immigration are part of the so-called TAN (traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist) pole of the cultural dimension, whereas pro-immigration positions are part of the GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) pole (Hooghe et al. 2002). Therefore, in order to capture the influence of the populist radical right on a given party system, it is not sufficient to consider only its electoral strength: it is necessary to investigate how culturally authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions are widespread in that party system. Table 2.10 includes, indeed, indicators of the economic left-right dimension¹⁸ and cultural libertarian-authoritarian dimension.¹⁹ As shown by the

¹⁸ It is the mean of the mean values of parties on a 0–10 economic left-right scale, where 0 means Extreme Left and 10 means Extreme Right. Parties have been classified in terms of their stance on economic issues. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state.

¹⁹ This is the so-called GAL-TAN index and it is the mean of the mean values of parties on a 0–10 ‘libertarian-authoritarian’ scale, where 0 means Extreme Libertarian and 10 means Extreme Authoritarian. Parties have been classified in terms of their stance on democratic freedoms and

data, party systems of the SIRIUS countries are not particularly polarised. In general, however, socio-culturally TAN positions prevail, also in contexts in which economically left-wing positions prime. For instance, in Greece the cultural libertarian-authoritarian index (the so-called GAL-TAN index) ranges from 5.0 in 2010 to 5.6 in 2014, while the economic left-right index ranges from 3.4 to 4.1 in the same years (in 2017 the GAL-TAN index is still higher than the left-right one, 5.4 vs. 4.9). A very similar pattern is observed in Italy. In Switzerland and the Czech Republic, where both socio-culturally authoritarian and economically right-wing positions prevail, the former are more widespread than the latter. Czech Republic is the country that shows the highest level of the GAL-TAN index (5.9 in 2017), confirming to be a context not particularly favourable to pro-migrant positions. The UK is again an exception, being the context with an increasingly slight prevalence of both socio-culturally libertarian and economically left-wing positions over time.

The prevalence of TAN positions on the cultural dimension, even in contexts in which economically left-wing positions prime, confirm on the one hand that the cultural GAL-TAN and economic left-right divides are different dimensions of the political space, with some parties taking both TAN positions on the cultural dimension and left-wing positions on the economic dimension. On the other, these data show again that party positions in SIRIUS countries generally favour the adoption of restrictive policy measures on immigration.

To conclude, citizens' perceptions and political context are closely related phenomena that can explain the restrictive approach to immigration adopted by several European governments as mentioned in the first section, despite the factual reality which does not corroborate claims about an "invasion of immigrants in Europe" and regardless of evidence about immigration's positive effects in economic and demographic terms for European countries (Storesletten 2003; Lee and Miller 2000; Mayr 2005).

2.5 Conclusions

The European countries analysed in this study are characterised by very different socio-economic conditions, different stocks and flows of MRAs, and diverse welfare state regimes. Nevertheless, the law and policy-making on immigration issues in such different contexts has been characterised by a broadly restrictive approach, as shown more in detail in Chap. 3. Therefore, in the introduction we hypothesised that this policy approach is better explained by political factors, rather than the actual number of MRAs, their integration process, the effective European societies'

rights. "Libertarian" or "post-materialist" parties favour expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.

demographic and economic needs, within each national context. More precisely, we hypothesised that if actual numbers of MRAs were still relatively low in the selected European countries despite the recent refugee crisis, then the adoption of restrictive policies on immigration could be better explained by the following political factors: prevalence of negative attitudes towards immigration among European citizens and salience of the immigration issue; political relevance of populist radical-right parties who mostly mobilized on immigration issues and significant diffusion of their authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions within each country's party system. The underlying idea was that vote-maximising parties are conditioned by public attitudes on immigration and issue salience, which in turn are shaped by political entrepreneurship of radical right parties or moderate centre-right parties (Van Spanje 2010; Hobolt and De Vries 2015). In particular, populist-radical parties have become relevant political actors because on the one hand they have politicised immigration issues (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017) and have become more popular electorally by exploiting citizens' fears and concerns about immigration phenomena (Mudde 2011; Ivarsflaten 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012); on the other, these parties have influenced the positions and immigration policies of mainstream parties (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018) spreading in European party systems their authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions (Hooghe and Marks 2018), which are strictly linked to the aforementioned new cultural cleavage between supporters of cultural demarcation and international integration (Kriesi et al. 2006). This hypothesis has been tested by contrasting legislative and policy measures on migration and integration issues with the numbers of MRAs in each national context, as well with the above-mentioned political features.

The analysis has shown that there is a certain inconsistency between legal and policy measures adopted by SIRIUS governments on immigration issues and the numbers of immigration. On the one hand, in fact, over time there has been both a narrowing of the legal access channels and a legal marginalization of MRAs as regards the access to social benefits and their right to work, thus making legal immigration more difficult and producing the phenomenon of the so-called legal peripheries (Chouinard 2001). In terms of labour market integration policies, there is a huge variation across countries in terms of duration of integration programmes, availability of services offered and migrant groups entitled to such programmes, with asylum seekers being usually the most disadvantaged. Despite national differences, which can be explained by the different welfare regimes and amount of resources dedicated in general to active labour market policies, several and similar barriers to labour market integration are a common feature of the analysed countries, which are not properly addressed by a usually short-term approach towards integration.

On the other hand, data on MRAs stocks and flows tell us that Europe is not facing an invasion: the amount of migrants and asylum seekers entering and living in Europe is perfectly manageable. It is true, indeed, that between 2014 and 2016 European countries faced a critical moment, with a clear rise of asylum seekers. However, in the following years there has been a sharp decline in these figures and the number of first instance and final decisions granting a form of international

protection have dropped. Moreover, it should be stressed that non-EU nationals represent less than 10% of the resident population in each of the analysed countries in 2018. Finally, the numbers of immigration tell us not only that the latter is not 'out of control', but also that it is somehow necessary from a demographic and economic standpoint: indeed, net migration has been the main driver of EU population growth during the last years and has reduced the proportion of inactive population given that most migrants are of working age (and the amount of work residence permits reflects this reality). Restrictive policy measures, therefore, seem to be not justified by the reality of immigration in the selected European countries. In addition, the claimed goal of fighting illegal immigration has not been achieved, given that the restriction of legal entry for non-EU migrants has not stopped illegal immigration and repatriations proved to be difficult: indeed, as shown by previous studies (De Haas 2011), restrictive immigration policies often result in being ineffective because they are unrealistic.

If policy-measures seem to be disconnected from data about immigration, they are totally connected with the political climate, with cuts to integration programmes and narrowing the access fostered by anti-immigrant politics. Anti-immigrant attitudes and in general fears and concerns about immigration phenomena, indeed, represent a constraint for decision-makers and are the main reason for right-wing populist parties' appeal in Europe (Mudde 2011; Ivarsflaten 2008; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). In this regard, our data show that immigration issue is salient and in most countries negative attitudes towards immigration prevail. Such negative attitudes keep being widespread, albeit with different degrees according to national contexts, even after the so-called refugee crisis of 2014–2016. A clear example of this inconsistency between real data and perceptions is represented by the Czech Republic: among those discussed here it is the country with the lowest share of legally resident immigrants in 2018 (together with Finland) and it is the country showing the most negative attitudes towards immigration according to the Eurobarometer survey of 2018. These perceptions usually are disconnected from real data as shown by a recent study (Valbruzzi 2019), but they do count for both law and policy-making. Indeed, populist radical parties on the one hand follow and represent citizens' fears and negative perceptions of this phenomenon, on the other they shape the public debate on immigration issues, actively contributing to form and spread such negative attitudes and misperception about immigration numbers: hostility towards immigrants and misperception about the real presence of immigrants in one's own country are indeed very related phenomena (Valbruzzi 2019) and partisan mobilisation is fundamental for the politicisation of immigration issues (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017). As shown in this chapter, the electoral strength of populist radical right parties has increased over time, although with different trends and levels among SIRIUS countries. Despite these cross-country differences, the political relevance of populist right-wing parties in recent years is a matter of fact. These parties have strongly influenced immigration policies in two ways: on the one hand, populist right-wing parties have come to power in some countries (for example in Italy, Austria, Poland), on the other their electoral rise has influenced the positions and policies of mainstream parties (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018).

The overall influence of populist radical right parties on European party systems is finally shown by the fact that socio-culturally authoritarian/traditionalist/nationalist positions prevail in SIRIUS countries, even in contexts where economically left-wing positions prime. These data confirm the increasing salience within the European political spaces of the cultural dimension related to issues of cultural demarcation vs. cultural integration (Kriesi et al. 2006). This new cleavage cuts across the economic left-right divide and is increasingly shaping party competition and voting behaviour (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2006). To conclude, citizens' perceptions and party systems' features are closely related phenomena, which influence one another and are all key factors that need to be considered to explain the law and policy-making of recent years on immigration issues.

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- Eurostat database (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>)
- SIRIUS database (https://www.sirius-project.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/WP2_D2.1.xlsx)

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