Immigration and Integration in the European Union

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Abstract: Immigration has become a fact of life in the European Union, a social phenomenon. Therefore, integration policies for immigrants have an important role. It is recognized that immigration and the integration of immigrants have become, and will probably remain, a sensitive issue from a political and societal point of view. Many European Union documents state that successful integration contributes to addressing some of the challenges currently faced by member states, such as the high cost (human and social) of economic exclusion, distrust in the fairness of public systems or the spread of all forms of ideologies extremist. Integration and immigration are debated topics in academia both for theoretical clarifications and for practical contributions by identifying appropriate solutions to the negative aspects of the integration process. Based on these considerations, the article aims, as objectives, to present: some definitions of integration, the approach of Professor Yuval Noah Harari regarding immigration within the European Union, some statistics on immigration in the European Union and aspects of the European Union's immigration policy.

Keywords: integration; immigration; European Union; approach; statistics; survey

"We will make sure that people who have the right to stay are integrated and that they feel welcome.

They have a future to build - and skills, energy and talent to offer" (von der Leyen, 2020).

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1. European Integration and Immigrant Integration – Definition

The process of European integration is complex, an aspect reflected, claims Professor Bogdan Ștefanachi, "*in the impossibility of a single definition of the European Union, which combines the specific features of the state with those of international organizations, but without transforming into any of these categories*" (Ștefanachi, 2019, p. 17). The complexity of this process also emerges from the placement of European integration between the triumph of the supranational principle and the salvation of the nation-state, borrowing something from each - "decrypting the genome of European integration is directly dependent on the identification of the two components and the manner and proportions in which they combined" (Ștefanachi, 2019, p. 30).

The complexity of the European integration process is also highlighted by the British anthropologist Cris Shore, who appreciates that "for many integration theorists, the success of the European Union's integration project depends on its ability to create a new type of European identity among its citizens" (Shore, 2018, p. 5).

In another study on the cultural politics of European integration, Cris Shore argues that "*the elites tried to invent Europe at the level of public opinion through culture, which means that the European Union tried to invent Europe as a category of thought*" (Shore, 2000; Ștefanachi, 2019).

For Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, "the theory of European integration is a vibrant but dispersed field". To clarify the ideea, he presents two definitions: the first definition is that formulated by Ernst Bernard Haas, an authority in international relations theory and the founder of neofunctionalism, according to which: "*integration is the process whereby political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states*; the second definition is the one preferred by intergovernmentalists who focus more on the creation of political institutions to which member states subscribe (Wiener & Diez, 2009, pp. 2-3).

In the definition presented by Florin Popescu, European integration is "*an extensive political-economic and institutional process that tends to achieve an increasingly stressed interdependence between the community states, so that, gradually, they*

become parts of a whole with properties and functions distinct from its component elements" (Popescu, 2009, p. 1).

Regarding the integration process of immigrants, Mircea Radu presents the following three approaches: 1. there are authors who believe that immigrants are assimilated by the new society over a period of two or even three generations, and, at the end of this assimilation process, the differences between the newcomers and their children and the host society are no longer visible; the differences will only be in terms of name and appearance (eg skin color); 2. other authors believe that the process of assimilation leads to the renunciation by the involved parties of some elements of their own culture and identity and the taking over of others from other cultures, so that the result is an amalgam of elements coming from the cultures of the immigrants and from the host culture; 3. there are also authors who look at the assimilation process from a unilateral point of view, which claims the immigrants' conformity to the dominant culture, the process being carried out in stages, and at the end the differences between the newcomers, their children and the host society are erased, as far as regarding the social situation and cultural orientation of the former. In any of the three approaches, "*almost always, the immigrant population adapts more to environmental changes than the host population*" (Radu, 2006, pp. 321-322).

2. Immigration within the European Union - the approach of Professor Yuval Noah Harari

An interesting approach to immigration within the European Union was proposed by Yuval Noah Harari, professor of universal history in the History Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The premise of this approach is threefold: 1. the European Union's weakness in managing cultural differences - "*The European Union was built on the promise of transcending the cultural differences between the French, Germans, Spanish and Greeks. It could fall apart because of its inability to manage the cultural differences between Europeans and migrants from Africa and the Middle East*" (Harari, 2018, p. 144); 2. the contradictory reactions within the European Union regarding its identity and future - "*Some Europeans are calling for Europe to close its doors: are they betraying Europe's multicultural and tolerant ideals or are they just taking some thoughtful measures to prevent disaster?" Others demand that the*

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doors be opened even wider: are they faithful to fundamental European values or are they guilty of burdening the European project with impossible expectations" (Harari, 2018, pp. 144-145)*; 3. do we consider cultures equal or could some cultures be superior to others?*

With this premise, Professor Yuval Noah Harari proposes to analyze immigration within the European Union as a pact with four basic conditions or terms, as follows: "***Term 1****: the host country receives the immigrants;* ***Term 2****: Immigrants must adopt at least the basic norms and values of the host country, even if this means giving up some of their traditional norms and values;* ***Term 3****: If immigrants integrate sufficiently, over time they become equal and full members of the host country. "They" become "us";* ***Term 4****: compliance with the three terms"* (Harari, 2018, p. 145).

Furthermore, the approach to immigration within the European Union focuses on four debates that take place between pro-immigrationists and anti-immigrationists, regarding the four terms presented above, as follows:

Debate 1 concerns how immigration is understood: pro-immigrationists believe that EU member states have a moral duty to accept immigrants, regardless of the reason for their arrival in the host country - *"Especially in a globalized world, all people have moral obligations to all other people, and those who shirk those obligations are selfish or even racist"* (Harari, 2018, p. 145) and that it is useful to legalize immigration and deal with it openly *"rather than creating a vast underworld of human trafficking, illegal workers and undocumented children"* (Harari, 2018, p. 146); anti-immigrationists argue that the host country can have whatever immigration policy it wants - *"screening immigrants not just for their records or their professional talents, but even for things like religion"* (Harari, 2018, p. 146), considering *"immigration a privilege, and assimilation a favor"* (Harari, 2018, p. 147);

Debate 2 concerns the integration of immigrants received by the host country into the local culture: pro-immigrationists argue that Europeans should show tolerance towards immigrants and allow them freedom to respect their own traditions, provided that they do not affect the freedoms and rights of other people - *"If Europe has real fundamental values, they are the liberal values of tolerance and freedom, which imply that Europeans should also show tolerance towards immigrants and allow them as much freedom as possible to respect their own traditions, provided that they do not affect the freedoms and rights of other people"*

(Harari, 2018, p. 148); anti-immigrationists agree that tolerance and freedom are the most important European values, but accuse immigrant groups, especially those from Muslim countries, of intolerance, misogyny, homophobia and anti-Semitism - "Just because Europe values tolerance, it cannot receive too many intolerant people. (…) If Europe receives too many immigrants from the Middle East, it will end up looking like the Middle East" (Harari, 2018, p. 148) - and they argue that the local culture of the host country assumes a high risk and expense with immigrants;

Debate 3 is related to term 3 and concerns the length of time it takes for immigrants to become full members of the host country: pro-immigrationists call for rapid acceptance - "… *if third-generation immigrants are not considered and treated as equal citizens, this means that the host country is not fulfilling its obligations, and if this leads to tensions, hostility and even violence, the host country can only blame it on its own bigotry*" (Harari, 2018, p. 149); anti-immigrationists, on the other hand, argue that a longer probationary period is needed - "…*these inflated expectations are a big part of the problem. Immigrants should be patient. If your grandparents arrived here only 40 years ago, and now you're rioting in the streets because you don't think you're being treated like a native, then you've failed the test*" (Harari, 2018, p. 149);

Debate 4 concerns compliance with the three terms: pro-immigrationists argue that the host country is not honoring its pact commitments - "*Despite the honest efforts of most immigrants to integrate, the hosts make it difficult for them and worse than that, immigrants who successfully integrate are still treated as second-class citizens even in the second and third generations. It is, of course, possible that none of the parties will honor their commitments, thus fueling each other's suspicions and resentments in an increasingly vicious circle*" (Harari, 2018, p. 150); anti-immigrationists believe that immigrants do not comply with the term 2 - "*They do not make a sincere effort to integrate and too many of them maintain their intolerant and bigoted views of the world. (…) If people belonging to a certain culture have proven time and time again that they are not willing to abide by the immigration pact, why should we take in even more and create an even bigger problem?*" (Harari, 2018, p. 150).

Professor Yuval Noah Harari believes that the debate on immigration between pro-immigration and anti-immigration should not be conducted as "*an intransigent struggle over a non-negotiable moral imperative, but as a discussion between two*

legitimate political positions, which should be resolved through standard democratic procedures" (Harari, 2018, p. 158).

The approach to immigration in the European Union proposed by Professor Yuval Noah Harari has several conclusions, for example: "Not all cultures are characterized by the same level of acceptance; In the practical context of immigration it could still be justified to regard the host culture as better; Traditional racism is dying, but the world is now full of people who discriminate on cultural grounds; While culture is important, people are also shaped by their genes and unique personal histories; At present, it is not at all clear whether Europe can find a middle way that allows it to keep its doors open to foreigners without being destabilized by people who do not share its values; One thing that could help Europe and the world as a whole to integrate better and keep borders and minds open would be to tone down the hysteria about terrorism. Terrorism is the weapon of a marginal and weak part of humanity" (Harari, 2018, pp. 152-154;158-159).

3. Some Statistics on Immigration in the European Union

In the European Union, immigration has become, according to the European Commission (Commission, 2021), a reality and, at the same time, a politically sensitive issue.

The coronavirus pandemic limited migration and immigration to the European Union for a while, but since 2021, and especially after the start of the war in Ukraine, numbers have started to rise. Thus, according to Eurostat, in 2021, 2.3 million people immigrated to the European Union from countries outside its space, an increase of almost 18% compared to 2020, Germany, Spain, France and Italy being the preferred destinations; on January 1, 2022, 23.8 million people (representing 5.3%) of the 446.7 million people living in the European Union were citizens from outside it; Greece and Italy are the countries in the front line of arrivals of migrants seeking to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, especially from Turkey (Migration and migrant population statistics, 2023).

Illegal entries into the European Union numbered 281,872 between January and September 2023, an 18% increase compared to the same period of 2022 (Illegal entries into the EU, 2023).

4. Some Aspects of the European Union's Immigration Policy

During the last half century, Europe has become "*a continent of immigration*", European societies have experienced increasing ethnic and cultural diversity (Scholten, Entzinger, Penninx & Verbeek, 2015, p. 1). Against this background, the recognition of the need to develop migrant integration policies was uneven in time and place; for example, in a number of cases, integration policies were formulated first at the local level, then at the national level; but since the beginning of this century, most European states have developed a form of integration policy, and after 2003, the European Union developed this policy on several levels (legal immigration, clandestine immigration, integration) (Scholten, Entzinger, Penninx & Verbeek, 2015, p. 1).

The integration of immigrants within the European Union must be understood as a process of active participation of immigrants in all dimensions of European society (political, economic, social, cultural, etc.); in fact, it is a process that must be viewed from two directions: from the point of view of immigrants legally resident in the European Union and from the point of view of the host European society. The European Union's actions on integration consist of providing incentives and supporting actions carried out by member states to promote the integration of third-country nationals who are legally resident.

Immigration policies, according to the Treaty of Lisbon, should be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair distribution of responsibility, including its financial implications, among member states (Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Since 2008, a number of directives on legal immigration and integration have been adopted, many of which have already been revised[1].

With regard to legal immigration, the European Union has powers to determine the conditions of entry and residence for third-country nationals who enter and reside legally on the territory of a Member State, including for the purpose of family reunification; its member states retain the right to determine the number of persons from third countries admitted to their territory to seek employment. As for combating illegal immigration, the European Union has the duty to prevent and reduce this form of immigration, through an effective return policy, respecting fundamental rights (Sandu, 2023).

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1   Details   of   these   directives   can   be   found   on   the   website *https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/ro/sheet/152/politica-in-domeniul-imigratiei.*

Integration for newcomers to the European Union has multiple values: it is necessary not only for them, but also for the local communities where they arrive, as well as for the well-being of society and the stability of economies.

In the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled *Action Plan on integration and inclusion for the period 2021-2027*, the need to support immigrants is mentioned - "*integration being both a right and a duty for everyone*" (Commission, 2020). Integration and inclusion, according to this document, must be a two-way process, in which immigrants must be helped to integrate; in turn they must make active efforts to integrate; the host society has the obligation to create for immigrants' various possibilities for economic, social, cultural, political participation, etc., immigrants having not only rights but also responsibilities towards the new country of residence. The document proposes to compare the integration policies of the member states of the European Union in order to facilitate rapid learning and to solve the lack of concrete data on the impact of the established measures. In this regard, four objectives were set: a better understanding of integration policies and their impact on outcomes over time and across territories; supporting national authorities and other interested parties in order to monitor the results of integration; the wider dissemination of an evidence-based debate in the field of integration; improving the availability of data and knowledge on integration at European Union, national and sub-national level.

One of the activities foreseen by the *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the period 2021-2027* was to carry out a new Eurobarometer on integration. This was achieved between November 2nd and December 3rd, 2021, by examining public opinion on the integration of immigrants into the European Union; 26,510 citizens from all the member states of the European Union were questioned. Among the conclusions (European Commission, 2021) of this survey we note: 69% of respondents believe that actively promoting the integration of immigrants is a necessary investment for their country in the long term; 85% of respondents are of the opinion that immigrants should be able to speak at least one of the Union's official languages in order to integrate better; 70% of respondents believe that integration is a two-way process in which both immigrants and the host society are involved; 53% of respondents believe that integration issues have a high priority, but not before important national priorities.

The reform of migration and asylum management recorded a historic moment in December 2023 with the approval by the European Parliament and the Member States of the European Union of a new set of rules, in order to provide an effective European response to this European challenge, and **in order to show that member** states share the effort with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in a responsible way, showing solidarity.

The European Union must be understood through the lens of the history of European integration and the way it was structured as a political-economic entity.

Immigration is and will remain a social phenomenon in the European Union. Through its documents and actions, the Union aims to introduce a balanced approach to tackle legal immigration and combat illegal immigration and develop effective integration policies.

Immigration and integration into the European Union are closely interconnected. In this sense, cooperation between the institutions of the European Union, the Member States of the Union, with local and regional authorities, with civil society organizations, with social and economic partners, with the private sector, with host communities, with diaspora organizations and with immigrants is crucial.

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