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Policy Brief - FRANCE

<p><b>The project aims</b></p>	<p><b>EMILIE PROJECT OVERVIEW</b></p> <p>EMILIE examines the migration and integration experiences of nine EU Member States and attempts to respond to the new challenges that multiculturalism is facing in Europe in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. EMILIE studies three important areas: Education; Discrimination in the workplace; Voting rights and civic participation, in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Spain and the UK. EMILIE aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• track the relationship between migration-related diversity and citizenship, i.e. multicultural citizenship, across these EU countries; and</li> <li>• identify whether multicultural citizenship is emerging in Europe, and if so what distinctive patterns and types can distinguished.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case studies</b></p>	<p>EMILIE conducted three policy-related case studies in each country. The first set of case studies focused on education policy and the measures and practices adopted in dealing with cultural diversity in secondary education. The second set of case studies assessed the implementation of the EU 2000 Anti-Discrimination Directives in the different national contexts. And the third set of case studies investigated voting rights and overall issues of political participation and representation of migrant communities and ethnic minorities in the countries studied.</p>
<p><b>Definitions</b></p>	<p>(Multicultural) Citizenship: The notion of citizenship requires a self-governing political community in which individuals have rights and correlative duties enforced by law but are likely to also have a sense of shaping and being shaped by a public space that goes beyond law and politics. Multicultural citizenship debates ask how citizenship can be fully enacted for and by individuals that are culturally diverse.</p>
<p><b>Methods, data and period of reference</b></p>	<p>Each case study focuses in the last twenty year period (from 1989 till today). Data collected include policy documents, media coverage, scholarly studies, statistical data, qualitative interviews with key informants, and where it has been possible discussion groups with civil society actors and policy makers.</p>
<p><b>Focus</b></p>	<p>The project is concerned with migration-related cultural diversity and not with historical, native ethnic minorities. Special attention is paid to religious diversity and issues concerning Muslim migrants as their integration in European societies has been approached as increasingly challenging in these EU Member States.</p>

**Main findings**

- Access to political rights in France is tied to the process of citizenship acquisition. Immigrants can vote and be voted only when they become French. This has prevented immigrants from participating in political life for quite a long time. However, the second generation immigrants automatically become French when they reach 18 years old. Moreover, France maintains a rather open approach on granting nationality (in average, 70% of the total of applications for citizenship are accepted every year)
- The challenge of political participation in France lies in the ability of political culture and discourse to incorporate ethnic claims. The state only recognizes individual rights while minority groups and their collective rights as such are denied. This leads to the marginalisation of the political expression of immigrants wishing to articulate specific ethnic, cultural or religious group-interests.
- The challenge of political representation in France lies in **the ability of political parties to accept and integrate members of visible minority groups and to legitimize the expression of ethnic groups' interests in political decision-making.** In fact, the level of ethnic minority (or post-colonial migration) representation is hard to measure due to the lack of ethnic statistics in France. Nevertheless, existing estimates indicate that it is very low (for example, 0.1% of the National Assembly).

## Features of migrant population and their political participation

In the absence of ethnic data, it is difficult to analyse the features of political participation among migrant origin French citizens. Exit polls give information about voters in terms of gender and age, but not in terms of ethnicity.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that:

- The young people with immigrant background that are registered to vote are fewer compared to the young without immigrant background that do so.
- Once they are registered, the ratio of young people with immigrant background that vote is similar to the ethnic French.

Moreover, surveys have shown that people with immigrant background share left-wing ideas when asked to position themselves on a 7-point scale:

- In 1988, 83% of the Paris youth positioned itself on the Left.
- In 2005, 63% of a representative sample of people of immigrant descent positioned themselves on the Left.

Political parties believe that minority populations do not make political choices according to their ethnic or religious belonging. As a consequence, the French political system has little, if any, **interest in ethnic demands and ethnic vote dynamics**.

Recent NGO mobilisations for the political participation of young people living in disadvantaged areas in the presidential elections of 2007 have been successful. Upon closure of the campaign, observers estimated an increase of 24% in registration rates. Yet, there is a long distance that needs to be covered in order to mobilise such groups of voters in local and European elections.

## Features of migrant population and their political representation

In the absence of ethnic data, the access of immigrant background French citizens to political representation can be measured by the names or photographs of elected politicians. In the last parliamentary and city council elections the following figures were gathered:

- In 2007, 3% of the candidates for parliament were members of visible minority groups. Only one of them was elected as MP (representatives of the overseas department excluded).
- In 2008, 2,000 out of 520,000 (0.4%) minority politicians were elected as city councillors.

The very low political representation of visible minority groups is confirmed by qualitative studies demonstrating cases of **discrimination inside the party system**.

There have been recent mobilisations – for instance, the Chart for Diversity in Politics issued by *Club XXIème siècle* (a lobby of high executives), or the Council for Diversity established by the CRAN (an NGO addressing Black issues) – around the introduction of more minority representatives inside the party system which have at least put the issue on the political agenda.

**Political participation and citizenship Policies**

Citizenship and nationality are inseparable and access to political rights is conditioned by the acquisition of French nationality.

The example of EU citizenship clearly demonstrates the difficulty to separate nationality from citizenship in the French case. France has been strikingly slow in enforcing Article 19 of the Maastricht Treaty regarding EU citizens' right to vote and to be voted in local and European elections. The European Commission had to lodge several appeals to France before the latter eventually adopted it. Article 88-3 was added to the Constitution in 1998 and European citizens were able to vote in local elections for the first time in 2001.

Although access to political rights is restricted to French nationals, admission of foreigners to French citizenship is wide compared to other countries in Europe. In the period 2000 to 2004, the average rate of acceptance in citizenship applications was 77.4%. In 2004, 64,695 out of 81,860 demands went through, that is 79% (in 2004, there were 3,500,000 foreigners in France).

**Forms of participation given to non-citizens**

Non-citizens have no visibility in the political system of representation. However, there has been a practice of including non-citizens in French political life through the creation of consultation bodies and the nomination of foreigners in the political process of decision-making. This practice draws from the 1970s tradition of appointing associations' leaders to 'represent' minorities in the administrative council dealing with migration-related issues.

However, according to our investigation in the City of Paris the practice of political consultation tends to marginalise ethnic demands. City Council members always brought a broad array of issues on the discussion table having a double aim in mind: to fulfil a gap in representation and, at the same time, keep distance from ethnic-specific interests. However, they could not prevent non citizens from dealing with issues of their own group-interest that were insufficiently addressed by politics. Therefore, the City Council of Paris does allow for group-based claims. However, they are the privilege of a consultation body that leaves little scope for agency to the foreigners taking part in it.

The interests of non citizens are channelled only through the ambiguous intentions of these institutions. This fact, in turn, contributes to the general disinterest in, and to a certain extent distrust of, the articulation of ethnic interests in French political culture.

French political culture attempts to reach equality by turning a blind eye to ethnic difference. This way inequity between individuals of different backgrounds remains unaddressed. The risk involved in this approach is the political marginalisation of entire segments of the population and the creation of double standards of membership to the French society.

**Key messages for promoting migrant and minority political inclusion and participation**

French political culture and discourse do not provide the means to address issues of ethnic and cultural diversity. The marginalisation of legitimate claims against and legitimate means of defending oneself from the discrimination encountered by parts of the French population is the biggest risk involved here.

Minority candidates need to be better integrated in the political system of participation and representation. This will only be achieved by making the articulation of ethnic interest acceptable and by measuring the extent to which different ethnic groups experience discrimination in their attempts to participate in political life.

It is therefore necessary to:

- Strengthen anti-discrimination strategies inside the party system and identify the barring of ethnic minority members from political parties .
- Call for a better integration of minority candidates in the political system.
- Recognize the value of ethnic lobbying, as a reflection of the pluralism of French society.
- Integrate ethnic interests in political culture and discourse.

Authors: Angéline Escafré-Dublet, Post-Doctoral Fellow, [angeline.escafre-dublet@ined.fr](mailto:angeline.escafre-dublet@ined.fr), Patrick Simon, Senior Researcher, [simon@ined.fr](mailto:simon@ined.fr), INED, France.

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For general information on the Project please contact Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou, Project Coordinator, at [anna@eliamep.gr](mailto:anna@eliamep.gr).

For more information on the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Programme of the European Commission please see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index_en.html)