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Policy Brief - UK

The project aims	EMILIE PROJECT OVERVIEW <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 21st 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">• track the relationship between migration-related diversity and citizenship, i.e. multicultural citizenship, across these EU countries; and• identify whether multicultural citizenship is emerging in Europe, and if so what distinctive patterns and types can distinguished.
Case studies	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.
Definitions	(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.
Methods, data and period of reference	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.
Focus	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.

Main findings

Main Challenges for increasing political participation

- The political representation of migration related minorities in Britain occupies an important place in public debates on society-wide representativeness, politicisation and inclusion, as well as quality of democracy.
- Although political representation of migration related minorities has been rising, at present, the proportion of minority representatives holding elected office does not sufficiently reflect Britain's ethnic diversity.
- Only 15 of 643 Members of Parliament are of ethnic minority background, 29 peers who are members of the House of Lords, and 662 were local councillors before the 2009 local elections (3% of 21,498 councillors in all of England and Wales).
- Minorities' distrust of the political process tend to increase when mainstream political parties do not attempt to take their interests on board. In addition, ethnic minority Parliamentarians are frequently contacted by ethnic minority electorate from outside their ward on the presumption that they are more likely to respond to their concerns.
- While some important progress has been made, one conclusion is that political parties want ethnic minority votes but not ethnic minority opinions.

Features specifically affecting ethnic minority population

Ethnic minority voter registration

The formal political participation of ethnic minorities by means of voting is inevitably based on their levels of electoral registration. If a section of the population is underrepresented on the electoral register, the level of turnout will not offer a reliable account of formal political participation.

- Young people are more likely not to be registered to vote than older people, and because the age profiles of minority communities, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, are *substantially* lower than those of white people. In addition, some ethnic minority communities are disproportionately affected by the lower levels of registration among younger voters.
- Other factors affecting ethnic minority registration include an unfamiliarity with institutions and procedures, language difficulties, concerns over anonymity and confidentiality, fear of harassment, administrative inefficiency, and anxieties over residence status.
- There is also the issue of housing tenure since disproportionately high levels of black African and black Caribbean minorities reside in social or rented housing which can lead to frequent movement and thus a requirement to continually re-register (though, conversely, there are disproportionately high levels of home ownership amongst some Asian communities).
- Given the transitory nature of contemporary migration from EU accession countries, these patterns of residence are being replicated, although we are yet to generate large-scale meaningful data on this.

Where research has sought to ascertain *why* ethnic minorities are disproportionately not registered, rarely has it reported that they do not want to participate in politics.

The changing levels of ethnic minority electoral registration illustrate the progress that *has* been made since the early 1960s, albeit in varying degrees across and within different communities. Specific initiatives in certain local authority areas have shown that there is scope for significantly increasing registration levels among ethnic minority communities.

Political representation and the role of parties

While it is clear that ethnic minorities share similar concerns to the wider electorate on matters such as education, health care, crime, unemployment and so forth, they also have specific concerns about the operation of racial discrimination in these very areas, as well as the impact of immigration policies, and, of course, transnational and international issues.

- Studies have highlighted experiences of discrimination and frustration centering on the failure to represent issues of concern or to allow equal access to positions of power, or to promote and support minority candidates.
- One particular complaint concerns the suspicion that ethnic minority candidates are only given non-safe, non-winnable seats, so that while procedures themselves can be non-discriminatory the pool of talent from which elected politicians are drawn will be limited.
- Consequently, only 15 of 643 Members of Parliament are of ethnic minority background, 29 peers are members of the House of Lords, and 662 were local councillors before the 2008 local elections (3% of 21,498 councillors in England and Wales).
- This situation has prompted the conclusion that political parties want ethnic minority votes but not ethnic minority opinions, and it is plausible that where mainstream political parties do not attempt to take minority interests on board, that this can lead to their distrust of the political process.
- It has long been argued that the political participation of ethnic minorities in Britain is affected by the policies and initiatives taken by the political parties to promote this very participation.
- These policies and initiatives include special arrangements to attract ethnic minority support, Party manifesto commitments, and most substantively, the number of ethnic minority candidates and elected MPs and councillors.
- The 2005 General election witnessed a small increase in the number of ethnic minority MPs to 15. This is well short of the 51 MPs from ethnic minority backgrounds that would in a sense reflect the proportion of ethnic minorities in Britain's overall population, and that corresponds to 8% of total.

Satisfaction in electoral systems and representation

There is a widespread insistence on the link that exists between electoral participation and the promotion of ethnic minorities in the democratic process. A frequent illustration is that ethnic minority Parliamentarians are contacted by ethnic minority electorate from outside their ward on the presumption that they are more likely to respond to their concerns. This habit allows room for narrow group-specific claims that essentially undermine the development of political representation on a wider and more integrated basis.

- It has been argued that the direct link provided between voters and their local Member of Parliament in Britain's current 'first past the post' (FPTP) voting system would be lost if certain systems of proportional representation were adopted.
- This need not be the case, however, if a hybrid proportional representation electoral system was used [such as the Additional Member System (used for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly) or alternative vote top-ups].
- The multi-seat electoral system used in the Republic of Ireland ensures every voter has a direct link to not one, but between 3 and 5 members, directly elected by their constituency.

How is political participation related to citizenship policies

Full political rights (encompassing a range of entitlements beyond voting rights) in Britain are only secured if an immigrant becomes a UK citizen.

- This requires a minimum of five years legal stay in the UK, of which at least one year must be classed as indefinite leave to enter or remain. This category denotes the immigration status conferred to a person who does not hold the right of 'permanent abode' but who has been admitted to the UK without any time limit on their stay and so is free to travel to and from the UK, and to take up employment or study and so forth without restriction.
- So, while full social and political rights, including access to social welfare, are only secured if an immigrant becomes a UK citizen, people with 'leave to enter' or with 'leave to remain' in Britain are entitled to vote. These permits may cover any length of time between three months to many years but excludes a person who has entered the country illegally.
- However, the formal legal arrangements around the political participation of non-citizens are not necessarily taken up, or are inhibited by convoluted opportunity structures. This is particularly evident in the practical issues surrounding the formal political participation of some ethnic minorities and most starkly illustrated by the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees.
- People from other European Union member states irrespective of immigration status may vote in local elections and in elections for devolved assemblies (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Mayor of London) but not in national elections. Conversely, British citizens living abroad can register as overseas electors and are eligible to vote in the UK and European Parliamentary elections for up to fifteen years after they have left the country.

Key Messages for promoting minority political inclusion and participation

The political representation of migration related minorities in Britain occupies an important place in debates around political participation across society. However, at present the proportion of minority representatives holding elected office does not sufficiently reflect Britain's ethnic diversity.

- One means of addressing this would be to exclude political parties' selection of Parliamentary candidates from the application of Race-Relations Act (1976 as amended in 2000 and 2003) which prohibits the selection or promotion of candidates (in any form of employment) based upon racial or ethnic grounds. This would allow for the creation of shortlists to choose from on the grounds of ethnicity in the selection of parliamentary candidates (this would be voluntary and not oblige or compel parties in any way).
- Best practice should be replicated in a way that is consistent with the values of each political party. For example, the Labour Party use an approach of 'zipping' which means that as a minimum each constituency ward has to nominate at least one woman and one ethnic minority candidate; this could be satisfied by nominating a woman of ethnic minority background (some wards may nominate two women and others might nominate one woman of ethnic minority background and two men).
- These are rules which are nationally implemented by the Labour Party, so that each ward will have the right to nominate three people for the long list before it goes to the shortlist. Naturally, if over 50% of the proportion of the membership votes for one candidate then that candidate automatically joins the shortlist of four to eight prospective candidates.

In this context, developments in the House of Lords have been particularly instructive. The House of Lords has seen its number of ethnic minority Peer leap from 5 in 1997 to 29 today. This resulted from a combination of both political appointments and open access applications from individuals active in civil society.

Finally, all political parties should seek to expand these practices in a way that will have real and sustainable outcomes geared towards improving the levels of ethnic minority political participation and representation in mainstream politics at all levels – from the local, to the national and the European.

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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