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**Challenges for migrant educational  
integration in different European  
welfare systems**

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**Abstract**

This paper deals with migration policy in Europe, a highly debated and disputed topic, which is the common concern of the authors of this thematic issue. We argue that social policies and welfare systems are key parameters in the global governance of mobility, attracting, directing, or containing migration flows. Education, as a crucial social policy, plays an essential role not only in the process of social integration of migrants in host societies, but also in the process of governance of mobility. Different education policies represent strategies utilized on the part of the states, aiming at integration, segregation or discouragement of mobility, thus reflecting wider migration policy in contemporary European societies.

**Keywords:** migration, refugees, welfare state, Europe, education policy

Mobility questions borders as social semantics and loci of political surveillance. It is generally acknowledged that “*the capacity of states in advanced capitalist societies to seal their borders has never been perfect*” (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999, p. 322). Surveillance and control over movement have always been a concern of the state. Although global governance of mobility is performed through international cooperation

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aiming to “stem flows at source” by means of economic aid or police, contemporary large-scale movements are dealt with through multilevel governance at the international, regional, intergovernmental, and state levels (Panizzon & van Riemsdijk, 2018).

At the European region, international agreements, such as the successive Dublin agreements as well as the 2016 EU – Turkey agreement, aim at containment of flows to the advanced North. Attempts at renegotiation of the Schengen agreement would further regulation of mobility within European states, thus fostering embankments protecting Northern countries. Institutions such as the European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) exercise constant watch of mobility. Moreover, states have established internal regulatory mechanisms of mobility, such as immigration and asylum agencies, digitalized documentation of citizenship, and enhanced scanning of migrants. Crucial means aiming at reducing the intensity and velocity of mobility of governance technologies such as classification of people on the move in several categories, i.e., as refugees in the sense of the 1951 Geneva Convention, asylum seekers granted international protection, unaccompanied minors, or undocumented migrants. As Long (2013) puts it, the “*devil of definitions*” and the distinction between refugees and migrants labels populations that are evidently blurred. Arguably, refugees are not “*just migrants*.” Differentiated political treatment of refugees derives legitimacy from a humanitarian discourse underpinning the notion of “protection,” while migration is conceptualized in essentially economic terms associated with labor mobility and economic development. Unavoidably, though, when it comes to social inclusion and integration, the above discourses intersect, thus revealing the inadequacies of the taxonomic principles governing state policy on mobility (Long, 2013).

The unprecedented refugee flows reaching European countries during the past years challenge the foundation principles of the European political and social integration model. Solidarity among European states has been seriously questioned in the dominant political discourse of several EU member states. The concept of fortress Europe reemerges putting the whole European unification model into perspective. On the other hand, countries that are at the frontiers of Europe, most notably Italy and Greece, have received large numbers of people on the move wishing to seek asylum in the prosperous North. These transit populations find themselves trapped due to fortification of the borders, especially on the part of the Visegrad group (The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). Yet, apart from the Visegrad countries, skepticism toward free movement, even of EU citizens, arises in several European countries stemming from far right wing and nationalist discourses. The rise of populist and nationalist political parties throughout Europe that criminalize immigrants results from these trends. Although European governance of refugee flows at the moment fails to effectively address the refugee crisis as a European issue, host

countries such as Greece are struggling to deal with the humanitarian crisis and accommodate the new populations.

Apart from surveillance of mobility, state migration policies govern and direct movement. European welfare systems respond differently to the contemporary refugee crisis. Different traditions in provision of social care (Esping-Andersen, 1990) are reflected in refugee integration policies, i.e., in first aid, accommodation, health, education, and employment policies (Scholten et al., 2017). These policies influence aspirations of mobility and govern flows to imaginary dreamlands of prosperity, a tendency that according to some analysts constitutes “welfare migration” (Münz, 2017, p. 15). Welfare migration does not necessarily imply that the newcomers are economic immigrants aiming to upgrade their living standards. Mobility initiated from armed conflict, violence, or environmental crisis is also attracted by developed welfare systems that are more susceptible to integrate populations seeking for social security. On the other hand, immature welfare regimes of the European South (Ferrera, 2005) struggle with vast numbers of migrants who find themselves trapped and in several cases deported and returned to their country of origin, in implementation of the Dublin agreement.

Imbalance of power between rich and poor is certainly an important but one of the reasons of migration. Taking into account that social citizenship, in Marshall’s terms (1950), is a regulation of access to the limited resources of a certain polity, “economic nationalism” (Pinson, Arnot, & Candappa, 2010) has flourished as a response to globalization and mobility. Arguments regarding the contribution of migrants to national economies have been used as governance technologies to monitor migration flows. Labor-importing countries, such as Germany, attract and recruit skilled labor, thus exercising selective procedures among the successive waves of immigrants reaching Europe. As a matter of fact, education is a major parameter in governing mobility, since it plays a pivotal role in selection, consolidation, and integration of skills in the advanced European economies (Zambeta & Papadakou, 2018).

On the other hand, xenophobia and hate speech are on the increase in most European countries. Discourses on economic territoriality and protection of national economies as against the international mobility of labor force have gained influence in several European states (such as in the Brexit argumentation, Orban in Hungary, and Le Pen in France), thus challenging the predominantly humanitarian image of European political cultures. Populist discourses on the part of extreme right-wing politicians give rise to the “*politics of fear*” and renationalization of border policies (Wodak, 2015). The development of a “hostile environment” toward refugees is in tandem with these trends (Candappa in this issue).

The current thematic issue focuses on migration in the broader sense that embraces all kinds of migrant mobility irrespective of its formal legal status and classifications

(asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants). It aims at examining the way in which different welfare regimes tackle contemporary flows, referred to as “refugee crisis.” Particular emphasis is placed on education policies and responses toward asylum seekers, refugees, and newly arrived immigrants. Conceptualizations of welfare state such as those of Esping-Andersen (1990), Cochrane, Clarke, and Gewirtz (2001), Arts and Gelissen (2001), Ferrera (2005) inform the analysis, without necessarily providing for an overarching analytical framework, as the thematic issue brings together approaches deriving from different backgrounds and epistemological paradigms.

Key questions addressed are:

- How do different welfare regimes respond to the contemporary “refugee crisis” and wider migration influx in Europe?
- How is immigration perceived and talked about in public discourses and among educational actors in particular, throughout European states?
- Which are the main strategies deployed regarding refugee/asylum-seeking people’s inclusion in European societies?
- In what ways European educational systems tackle the refugee/migration issue and which are the basic policies adopted regarding access to education and social inclusion?
- How do refugee educational policies and strategies relate to wider governance of refugee flows?

Contributors of this issue, by focusing on different countries, attempt to shed light on varied aspects of the above questions, depending on country specificities.

This thematic issue brings together analyses arising from different types of welfare regimes, that is from social democratic cases (Sweden and Iceland), a liberal regime (the UK), a Central Eastern European transitional regime (Hungary) in comparison with a corporatist/conservative welfare regime (Austria), and a Mediterranean residual welfare regime (Greece).

Anna Katarzyna Wozniczka and Per-Åke Rosvall in their article titled “*A Nordic Model in Policy and Practice? The Case of Immigrants and Refugees in Rural Schools in Iceland and Sweden*” attempt a cross-national analysis within the Nordic and social democratic welfare regimes, examining challenges for migrant students’ educational inclusion in rural areas of Iceland and Sweden. Based on a comparative ethnographic study, they aim at analyzing power relations and prospects for migrants’ educational and social

integration in a less studied context, i.e., in rural educational settings. In spite of recent devolution policies and neoliberal trends, especially in Sweden, both countries continue to represent a social democratic model of welfare provision, which is evident in several findings of Katarzyna Wozniczka and Rosvall research, such as the effort to foster links among social policies for migrants and particularly between education and employment. Yet, the social democratic nature of welfare state does not necessarily reflect inclusive practices at school level, or the participants' experiences regarding agency and social relations in rural communities. Rurality could denote a more flexible, less bureaucratic, and potentially friendly environment for social integration, since it is often associated with dense and more personal community relationships. As it seems, migration presence in rural areas is both the outcome of central distribution of migration on the part of the state and individual preference on the part of migrants themselves seeking for social integration. However, it appears that central state migrant integration policy does not equally impact on dispersed communities. Politics on the teaching profession as a response to immigration influx, such as development of the profession's capacity to address diversity, has only marginally affected rural schools. On the other hand, school autonomy to decide on inclusion policy does not essentially guarantee a general strategy for migrant integration, thus undermining the social democratic nature of the regime.

Mano Candappa in her article titled "*Border Politics, the 'Hostile Environment' for Migration, and Education in the UK*" examines contemporary political discourses on migration. Drawing upon Foucault's conceptualization of power and biopolitics, Agamben's notion of bare life, and Bauman's critique on the ethics of modernity, she analyzes migration policy over the past decade. Based on official documents, and particularly changes in the UK legal framework related to the governance of what has been perceived as "migration crisis" in the Global North, she examines the execution of state sovereignty on border control. As a matter of fact, contemporary migration policy is straightforwardly defined by the UK government as the development of a "hostile environment" for migration, a policy affecting not only newcomers, but also naturalized citizens from the Commonwealth and, in view of Brexit, EU citizens as well. The analysis offers illuminative insights on the intersection between police of migration and welfare state policy, such as health care, housing, employment and education, in the registration and, eventually, restriction of mobility. She argues that the already anemic social provision in social care toward migrants has become even more restricted since 2016, because it has been interlinked to the UK Home Office, a fact that potentially leads to deportation. The brutality of recent UK migration policy raises significant questions for the ethics of contemporary western democracies and human rights.

Judit Langer-Buchwald in her article titled "*The Situation of Migrant Children in the Hungarian and the Austrian Education System – Multilingualism, Interculturalism,*

*Integration*” conducts a comparative study between an ideal type of a central European conservative welfare regime, Austria, and Hungary, a post-communist state undergoing a process of transition to a conservative welfare regime. Hungary, having followed a strict border control policy that does not abide to the EU Dublin agreement, eventually has marginal numbers of migrants. Indeed, the current Prime Minister, Orban, represents one of the extreme voices in Europe with an anti-immigration and populist rhetoric (Wodak, 2015), emphasizing national cultural purity, challenging the basic principles of *acquis communautaire* and freedom of movement among European citizens, thus suspecting the European unification and integration model as such. In Austria, on the other hand, despite the rise of right-wing nationalism that criminalizes immigrants, there are significant numbers of migrants including current flows of refugees. Langer-Buchwald in her article discusses the influence of the anti-immigration in the Hungarian society and the difficulties of the Hungarian state to deal with migration, varying from definitions used in official statistics to social and educational practices. She studies comparatively policies for migrant integration in the contexts of Austria and Hungary and offers fruitful insights on the pitfalls in the implementation of the basic principles of intercultural education as well as the potential of education to override language barriers, promote critical multilingualism, and contribute to social inclusion. The two countries are compared with regard to education policy related to migrant integration. The genuinely ethnocentric and nationalistic character of Hungarian education that ultimately undermines its inclusive potential for migrants is juxtaposed to a rather republican notion of citizenship and belonging promoted in Austrian schools. On the other hand, the case of Austria provides for an indicative example of the use of education as a governance strategy of migration; the benchmark of German language acquisition is used as criterion for naturalization, residence permit, or deportation.

Evie Zambeta and Yulie Papadakou in their article titled *“Governing Refugee Flows in European Contexts and the Strategic Role of Education. Perspectives From the Frontiers”* examine responses on the part of different welfare regimes to global mobility and especially to the contemporary migration movements. Drawing upon a comparative study of different European welfare regimes as defined by the Esping–Andersen typology, they discuss some of the governance strategies deployed among European states aiming to monitor mobility and particularly refugee flows. It is argued that, apart from the wider EU immigration policies, which certainly constitute major parameters governing mobility, welfare state traditions, and systems indeed account for distinctive integration policies and strategies regarding refugees on the part of European states, a fact that consequentially acts as steering mechanism to mobility, directing, and redirecting flows. Furthermore, they examine refugee education policies in selected European countries, with a particular focus in Greece. They argue that education shares responsibility in governing mobility and refugee flows by being both a governance strategy on the part of



the state to recruit skilled labor and assimilate migrants and a social strategy on the part of migrants themselves for relocation and integration. The discursive strategies deployed within Greek educational institutions with regard to refugees vary from traditional national narratives of “philoxenia” (hospitality) to social closure strategies of territoriality. Although apparently contradictory, both the above strategies actually hinder educational inclusion, since they reproduce imbalanced power relationships underlining the alleged cultural superiority of the “host.”

In this thematic issue, we argue that social policies and welfare systems are key parameters in the global governance of mobility, attracting, directing, or containing migration flows. In several cases, they interact with police of migration mediating asylum procedures, acquirement of international protection status, and residence permits or deportation. The European welfare states are confronted with two main challenges. The first one is *neoliberalism* that consistently and systematically, since the 1980s, aims at deregulation of public provision in social care, from social benefits and insurance, to health care, labor relationships, and education. Apparently, despite global neoliberal agendas, the historical attributes of the European welfare systems withstand existing deregulation processes, presenting remarkable resilience.

The second and more recent challenge is *populism* and *nationalism*. The European welfare heritage has been built upon the fundamental notion of human freedom that has allowed human rights ideals to flourish, from the 18th century recognition of basic individual freedoms to the gradual and strenuous establishment of social rights. The idea of redistribution of income through social policy is fundamentally based on the notion of collective commitment and respect to human dignity. The anti-immigration rhetoric in several European states tends to juxtapose the notion of national purity and “security,” allegedly threatened by the presence of immigrants – often unjustifiably associated with criminality or even militaristic extremism, to that of human rights, thus putting into perspective the foundation stone of European political heritage and the welfare state as such. If human rights are universal, indivisible, and inalienable, they should not be relativized by juxtaposition to the notion of security or national purity. Such a prospect would challenge not only the humanitarian character of European polities, but also the human condition itself.

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### Ethics

The study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

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