

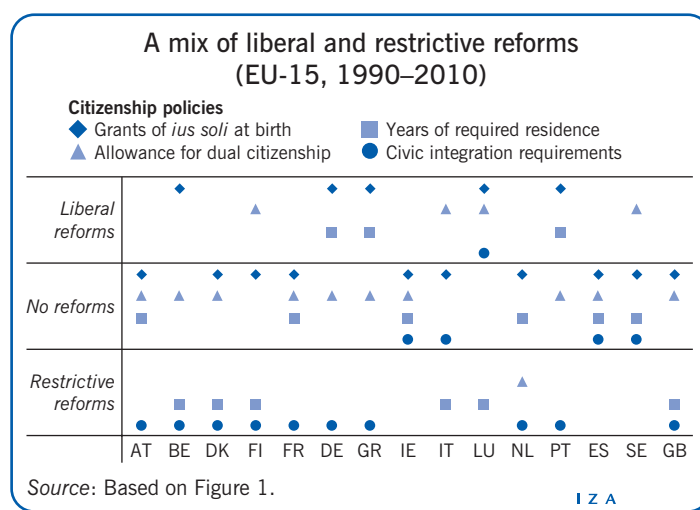
The changing nature of citizenship legislation

Concepts of citizenship are not universally defined and need rethinking

Keywords: law and economics, international migration, diversity, education

ELEVATOR PITCH

Citizenship laws are changing in many countries. Although cross-national differences in the laws regulating access to citizenship are today not as large as they were several decades ago, they are still very apparent. Globally, there is convergence over some citizenship policy dimensions, but there is not a general convergence over “liberal” or “restrictive” approaches to citizenship policy. A growing body of research has put forward various comparative measures of citizenship and migrant integration policies. However, selecting the “right” index is a challenging task, and the underlying dynamics of citizenship laws are not easy to interpret as they differ across countries.



KEY FINDINGS

Pros

- ⊕ Citizenship policies are a crucial determinant of the degree of migrant integration.
- ⊕ The evolution of citizenship laws is key to understanding the dynamics of international migration.
- ⊕ Citizenship policy is at center stage of the political agenda in many countries, which suggests its high relevance to national policy.
- ⊕ Many new measures of citizenship and migrant integration policies have recently been introduced.

Cons

- ⊖ The direction of recent changes in citizenship policies is not definite: there is not a general convergence on liberalism or restrictiveness.
- ⊖ The available measures of citizenship and migrant integration policies cannot be easily interpreted and compared.
- ⊖ Citizenship is only one element of migrant integration.
- ⊖ The relationship between the degree of liberalism in citizenship policies and the size of the international migrant population is positive but not robust.

AUTHOR’S MAIN MESSAGE

Citizenship is key to improving the socio-economic and political integration of immigrants. Laws regulating access to citizenship are however only one element of migrant integration. Politicians should consider citizenship in combination with labor market and educational policies in order to design appropriate integration policies. In today’s multicultural societies, the traditional notion of citizenship as belonging to a particular nation state needs to be reviewed. A new concept of citizenship should be considered that recognizes people as mobile individuals who are interconnected and interdependent across national boundaries. Citizenship and the associated rights and duties should be based predominantly on the principle of residence in a territory, thus encouraging migrant self-determination and integration. Citizenship education would be a key policy tool for embedding this new, inclusive vision.