

CHAPTER 2

INTEGRATION POLICY IN AUSTRIA

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During the past decade, immigrant integration has become one of the most widely debated topics in Western Europe. Far right parties – who have been gaining influence in many European countries – are especially quick to capitalize on the widespread fears that the alleged “lack of integration” of certain immigrant populations is leading to the creation of “parallel societies” and to the rise of “religious extremism” (Howard 2009). In reaction, governments struggle to seize the issue for themselves, waging fierce political battles over the appropriate response to what is widely perceived as a major challenge facing European societies. Thus, integration has become a ubiquitous topic in the European media and political debates in general, and in Austria in particular. Consequently, in the academic literature, immigrant integration has attracted increased attention by sociologists, ethnographers, and political scientists alike (see Givens 2007 for a review).

Yet despite this intense engagement with the topic in the political and academic discourse, the concept of immigrant integration remains rather ambiguous and contested. For some observers, integration means equal treatment and equal access by migrant populations to the same rights and duties as native citizens; for others, it refers to migrants’ adoption of the majority society’s values and way of life (for a typology see Schiffauer 2008, 7-15). Therefore, before going on to analyzing Austrian politics and policies of immigrant integration, it is imperative that we lay down our analytical framework. For the purposes of this paper, we build upon the conceptualization by Johan Wets (2006), who distinguishes between three dimensions of integration: social, cultural, and structural. *Social integration* refers in this case primarily to the degree of interaction and “contact” between immigrant and native population groups. Here the

whole debate on “parallel lives” and “social cohesion” comes into play (Cantle 2001; Vertovec 2006, 25-7). *Cultural integration* refers to the degree to which immigrant and native communities share values, norms, and preferences. *Structural integration*, in turn, refers to the socio-economic and political aspects of integration as represented by the degree of inclusion of, and participation by, migrant populations in the major institutions of society. Of particular relevance are the labour market, the welfare state, the educational system, the housing market, and the political system. Here it is important to note that this differentiation of the concept of integration into three dimensions is not meant normatively – we do not postulate a particular understating of what integration is or should be like. Rather, these are analytical distinctions that enable us to assess the character and the goals pursued by specific integration policies.

Against this background, the paper aims to find out *how* and *to what extent* the different dimensions of integration are addressed in Austrian politics. In order to do so, the following sections look into (1) patterns of immigration to Austria and evidence on the structural position of immigrant populations; (2) existing civic/cultural integration policies, as well as the political contexts in which they emerged; and (3) structural opportunities and barriers to integration conditioned by measures adopted in other policy fields. In our conclusion we sum up the main remaining challenges that Austria faces in the field of immigrant integration and propose avenues for future policy in this area.

Our main finding is that in Austria the politics of immigrant integration is primarily discursively constructed as pertaining to the cultural dimension. Whenever the topic is discussed and policies are enacted under the label of “integration,” they tend to cover civic integration and focus on language acquisition and civic education, thus emphasizing the sharing of values and norms as well as the cultural aspect of the need to use a common language. Moreover, the discourse refers exclusively to the integration of third-country nationals, that is, of immigrants from outside the EU, even though 40 percent of all alien residents living in Austria come from other EU countries (Huddleston and Niessen 2011; Kraler 2011). This approach goes hand in hand with a restrictive immigration policy and citizenship regime as well as with a discursive self-understanding that has historically characterized Austrian politics and is only recently starting to change: of “not being” and “not wanting to be” a country of immigration (Bauböck and Perchinig 2006; Perchinig 2009). At the same time, the structural integration of foreign born population and their offspring (second and third generation) suffers from severe deficits, particularly with respect to educational attainment. To a certain extent the lack of policies addressing structural integration is mitigated by a strong welfare state. Within the framework of the Austrian welfare state, there are scattered policies that contribute to improving the socio-economic incorporation of immigrant populations. Nevertheless, it has to be noted

that these policies are only available to immigrants who have acquired Austrian citizenship or possess certain types of residence permits. Other categories of immigrants – particularly temporary / seasonal workers and asylum seekers – have very restricted access to social rights and therefore do not benefit from the developed labour and welfare policies.

IMMIGRATION AND IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS IN AUSTRIA

Throughout its history, Austria has been a target country for international migration. During its imperial past, it was the centre of a multi-ethnic empire and as such received large influxes of populations from what is nowadays considered Eastern Europe and the Balkans. After World War II, there were two main waves of international migration, first in the 1960 and '70s and then in the 1990s, followed by continuous flows of family migration.

The first wave occurred within the regulated framework of the so-called *Gastarbeiter*¹ programs of the 1960s and early 1970s, whereby the Austrian government actively recruited temporary labour migrants for low-skilled jobs (see Bauböck 1996; Payer 2004). These migrants came from low-educated rural areas in less developed southern countries, especially Turkey and former Yugoslavia. The *Gastarbeiter* program was based on the premise that immigrant workers would return to their country of origin after working abroad for a certain time. As a consequence, there were no policies aimed at improving the educational and qualification level of these immigrants and their children and their integration into Austrian society (Perchinig 2009, 233). On the contrary, there were legal impediments to the integration of immigrants into society, such as curtailed rights and obstacles to the acquisition of permanent resident status and citizenship. Tellingly, immigrant children were often offered language courses in their mother tongues – Turkish and Serbo-Croatian – rather than in the language of the host country, so that they would be able to integrate into the country of origin of their parents.²

However, the envisaged return of these temporarily recruited labour migrants did not take place as planned. Many migrants decided to stay and in fact managed to acquire permanent status or even Austrian citizenship. The *Gastarbeiter* program ended in the 1970s, and since then the government has adopted a discourse of “zero immigration.” In reality, however, immigration has continued to rise, although mainly under the rubric of family reunification. Thus, along with their permanent settlement in Austria, the previous *Gastarbeiter* began a new immigration pattern as they started to bring their families to Austria through family reunification.

A second wave of immigration took place in the 1990s, when large numbers of refugees fleeing the Yugoslav war sought refuge in this

country. In total about 90,000 refugees from former Yugoslavia, primarily from Bosnia and Croatia, fled to Austria. They were initially given temporary protection status, but it eventually became clear that a speedy return would not be possible. Thus, the government recognized that these refugees had become residents and gave them permanent status (Bauböck 1996, 21-2).

In addition to these two main streams, there are also other channels of immigration to Austria. One of them is the freedom of movement within the European Union. Since Austria joined in 1995, there have been no restrictions on the entrance and settlement of EU citizens – who have a right of free movement – into the territory.³ The main groups of immigrants from EU countries have been German, then Polish. Furthermore, the influx of temporary labour migrants into Austria has continued even after the adoption of the zero-immigration policy in the 1970s, although on a much smaller scale. In particular, since the legislative reform of 2002, Austrian legislation allows for a number of temporary workers to come into the country on short-term (in principle, also non-renewable) visas. The official possibility of recruiting temporary workers was foreseen by the 2002 law under the label of “seasonal workers,” even though in reality a significant number of these workers are not employed in seasonal industries. In a sense, the political intention behind the recruitment of labour migrants under the legal category of “seasonal worker” represents an attempt to revive the *Gastarbeiter* regime under a different guise (Perchinig 2006, 296).

Currently, the main sources of immigration to Austria from third-countries are family reunification and asylum seekers. In the year 2007, of all the persons who were granted an entry permit for the first time, about 27 percent were asylum seekers, 22 percent were entitled to a permit due to family reunification, 20 percent were seasonal workers with a non-renewable visa, 16 percent were students, and 11 percent were qualified labour migrants (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2009, 28). Although only about one-third of applicants are granted refugee status, the decision process may take several years. Many asylum seekers thus live in Austria for a long time and are de facto immigrants during the waiting period of their asylum claim, although their rights and freedoms are extremely curtailed during this time.

The successive waves of labour migration and continuous influx of family immigrants and refugees have led to a relatively high number of persons of migration background within the population. As of 1 January 2011, Austria had a population of about 8.4 million, of which 18,6 percent had a migration background – meaning either themselves or both parents were born abroad⁴ (Statistik Austria 2011, 20). First generation immigrants make up 15.7 percent of the population. Among the first generation, 40 percent possess Austrian citizenship and 60 percent remain

foreign citizens (*ibid.*). Overall, 11 percent of the population do not have Austrian citizenship; of those, 64 percent have been living in Austria for longer than five years (*ibid.*). Of the foreign population, 60 percent is made up of third country nationals, whereas 40 percent are citizens of other EU countries (*ibid.*).

The main ethnic groups of migrants have remained the same for the past few decades. About half of the new incoming migration to Austria are from EU countries, whereas the main groups of third-country nationals are persons from former Yugoslavia and Turkey. In 2007, for instance, 107,000 people immigrated to Austria, of which about half were citizens from a second EU country, mostly Germans, and 10 percent were returning Austrians. Incoming migration by third country nationals makes up only 37 percent of the total (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2009, 25).

TABLE 1
Average Net International Migration to Austria for the Years 2005, 2008, and 2010
by Citizenship

	2005	2008	2010
Austria	-3,863	-4,976	-4,163
Foreign citizens (total)	48,195	39,412	31,858
EU 26/EEA/Switzerland	18,958	25,633	22,443
Germany	8,639	10,544	7,779
Former Yugoslavia (without Slovenia)	11,156	3,160	3,631
Turkey	4,899	2,133	1,375

Source: Statistik Austria (2008a, 2010a).

Before analyzing the integration policies pursued in recent times, we would like to make a general assessment of the current social and economic situation of immigrants in Austria. As we shall see, third-country immigrants occupy a rather marginal position within the socio-economic structure, having lower education, higher unemployment rates, lower income, and higher poverty rates than the native population (see Fassmann 2007; Statistik Austria 2008b, 2008c; Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2009). This situation attests to the precarious structural integration of immigrant communities and points to the necessity of adopting effective integration policies. Nevertheless, there are major differences between various groups of immigrants. In particular, there is a huge chasm between immigrants from EU and EEA (*European Economic Area*) countries on the one hand, and immigrants from third-countries on the other hand, especially from Turkey and former Yugoslavia.

Although this discrepancy is present in all areas, it is particularly vivid in the field of education, which serves as an example of the broader phenomenon. The educational level of immigrants differs significantly from that of Austrian citizens, and there are also substantial differences between immigrant groups themselves. Whereas immigrants from EU/EEA countries tend to have higher educational levels than Austrian citizens, immigrants from traditional sending countries – Turkey and former Yugoslavia – have a much lower levels. For instance, whereas in 2010 10.7 percent of Austrian citizens and 25.8 percent of citizens of other EU countries had a university degree, this level of education was only reached by 3.4 percent of citizens from former Yugoslavia and 2.4 percent of Turkish citizens. By contrast, in the same year, about 72.1 percent of Turkish citizens and 47.6 percent of citizens from former Yugoslavia had only compulsory school education,⁵ whereas only 24.6 percent of the Austrian citizens and 14.1 percent of citizens from a second EU country were in a comparable situation (see Table 2). For the second generation the situation does not markedly differ. The educational system can therefore be characterized as ethnically segmented (Herzog-Punzenberger 2005). Socio-economic differences offer only a partial explanation; as a recent OECD report points out, even after accounting for socio-economic background, significant performance gaps remain between the performance of natives and third-country immigrants (or their children) in the educational system (Nusche, Shewbridge, and Rasmussen 2009).

TABLE 2
State of Education, Unemployment and Poverty Rates 2010 by Nationality
 (data given in %)

	<i>Education*</i>			<i>Unemployment**</i>	<i>Poverty***</i>
	<i>Compulsory School Education</i>	<i>Higher School Education</i>	<i>Tertiary Education</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>At Risk of Poverty</i>
Total	25.7	14.5	11.4	4.4	12
Austria	24.6	14.2	10.7	3.9	10‡
EU 27	14.1	23.1	25.8	6.2	15
Former Yugoslavia	47.6	11.8	3.4	8.6†	15†
Turkey	72.1	6.2	2.4	13.9	46
Other	29.4	17.5	37.6	11.6	57

† Excluding citizens from Slovenia.

‡ Only citizens by birth (excluding naturalized citizens).

Source: *Statistik Austria (2010b) (includes population aged older than 15 in private households). **Statistik Austria (2010b). ***Statistik Austria (2010c).

INTEGRATION AS A CONTESTED POLICY FIELD

Despite the long history of migration and the evident structural disadvantage suffered by persons with a migration background in access to education and upward mobility (see Table 2), integration has only very recently become a political priority for the Austrian government. In fact, immigrant integration was only institutionalized as an autonomous policy field in 2011 with the creation of a State Secretariat for Integration within the Ministry of Interior. The relatively late appearance of integration as a political field in Austrian politics can be partially explained by the predominance of an exclusionary discourse towards immigrants that translates into a national self-understanding of “not being a country of immigration” (see Valchars 2006; Kraler 2011). This “denial” is a defining moment of Austrian immigration discourse that has strongly influenced the way integration policy emerged as a political topic and the way it is approached in policy-making. Currently, however, the rise in political salience had much more to do with the negative approach to immigration by far-right parties than with a concerted political effort to tackle the institutional and structural obstacles that hamper the full incorporation of certain immigrant groups. This anti-immigration climate has created strong biases in the way in which integration is approached by political elites. The need for integration policies is mainly viewed within the context either of cultural adaption to the proclaimed Austrian value system or to the control and restriction of immigration to Austria. Nonetheless, recently a different dynamic has been sparked by the efforts of certain actors – especially some regional and local governments as well as industrial associations and economic interest groups – to recognize the importance of highly qualified labour migration and to tackle the issue of integration in a more proactive and welcoming way (Industriellevereinigung Wien 2009).

The issue of integration did not enter the political agenda until the 1990s, in a context of strong anti-immigrant sentiments. Three phenomena marked the 1990s as an unfavourable period for immigration and integration politics. Firstly, by this time it had become clear that some former *Gastarbeiter* were not going to return to their home countries, and that, on the contrary, they were increasingly acquiring Austrian citizenship and bringing their families to join them in their new homeland. It was also clear that this group was, for the most part, structurally disadvantaged in comparison to the majority population and culturally diverse. The combination of ethnic difference, cultural estrangement, and socio-economic marginalization reinforced anti-foreigner sentiments among the population and contributed to the perception that there was an “integration problem.” Secondly, the 1990s saw the rapid rise of far-right parties in Europe, and in particular in Austria. The FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), led by Jörg Haider, was highly successful in mobilizing latent xenophobic sentiments in the population by adopting strongly

anti-foreigner slogans and campaigns (Wodak and Reisigl 2000). Thirdly, the 1990s were marked by a negative shift in the political perception of asylum. Whereas during the Iron Curtain period, refugees fleeing communist regimes were perceived as political heroes and received strong political support, by the 1990s the image of the refugee had changed completely. The strong influx of asylum seekers gave rise to claims that Austria had exhausted its receiving capacity. At the same time, the figure of the “bogus asylum seeker” or “economic refugee” came into being, so that asylum seekers were increasingly treated as illegal migrants in disguise and associated with welfare state abuse and criminality (Rosenberger and König 2011).

It was in this context that “integration” – actually the *failure* of integration – entered the political debate in Austria. As a consequence, in the political discourse integration has primarily negative connotations. For instance, integration has been used repeatedly to justify legislation aimed at restricting immigration, creating obstacles for potential asylum seekers, and curtailing rights of foreign citizens. As Ruth Wodak and Michael Krzyzanowski (2009) show through a discourse analysis of parliamentary debates, in two major reforms of the immigration and asylum laws in 1997 and 2002, integration was the buzzword used to justify more restrictive legislation. The same can be said of the major legislative reform of the immigration and integration laws, which took place in 2005 (Österreichisches Parlament 2005). That “integration” was used discursively as a justification to restrict immigration is also evident in the slogan “Integration vor Neuzuzug” (Integration before new immigration) of the right-wing government coalition between the centre-right party ÖVP and the far-right party FPÖ (later BZÖ),⁶ in power between 2000 and 2006 (Regierungsprogramm der ÖVP-FPÖ Koalition 2000).

The allegation that certain communities are not well integrated is also often brought up in connection with religion, especially Islam. Even though Austria has an inclusive model of religious governance in which Islam is recognized as an official religion entitled to several rights and privileges (Mourão Permoser and Rosenberger 2009), Muslims are nevertheless often targeted by a rhetoric stressing that they will not comply with the Austrian value system, particularly in respect to gender equality. For example, the Interior Ministry of Austria commissioned a report about Muslims in Austria that became known as “the integration study” (Rohe 2006). The idea was to evaluate whether the Muslims community in Austria was “willing to integrate” or not. The study was based on a survey in which Muslims were asked questions about their religiosity and about their opinion on different topics. The author then classified the Muslim community into different groups according to their degree of religiosity and their attitudes. The conclusion reached was that there was a significantly large group of Muslims who were very religiously observant and conservative in their opinions. These were deemed to be

“unwilling to integrate.” A similar study was commissioned in 2009, this time encompassing all immigrants but with a special focus on the Turkish community (Ulram 2009).

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION POLICIES

In accordance with the claims of failed cultural integration, the agencies responsible for enacting concrete integration measures focus their activities on the cultural dimension of integration. At the federal level, this responsibility lies primarily with the Ministry of Interior, either directly or through the Austrian Integration Fund, an external agency financed by the ministry.⁷ The ministry also funds the so-called Austrian National Contact Point for Integration, located within the International Organization of Migration, in order to collect data, produce reports, and network with other EU countries.⁸ Until 2003, the integration policy of the Ministry of Interior was focused exclusively on recognized refugees and aimed at assisting refugees organizationally, financially, and psychologically in the first years following their entitlement to refugee status. The Austrian Integration Fund was the agency responsible for carrying out this task by offering psychological counselling, helping refugees to find housing, organizing German language training, and so on (see *Nationaler Kontaktpunkt Österreich* 2005, 49-57).

In 2002 a major amendment of the immigration legislation (revised in 2005 and 2011) under the centre-right/far-right coalition brought a major change in the integration policy of the ministry. From then on, immigrants expecting to settle down in Austria were required to sign a so-called “integration agreement.”⁹ This agreement amounts to a piece of paper stating that the migrant must achieve a basic level of knowledge of the German language within a specific period of time – to be proven by passing a standardized exam – as a condition of being able to stay in the country (NAG 2005, paras.14-16). Despite the focus on language acquisition, which under certain circumstances can be aimed at empowering immigrants, this policy was implemented within the context of a highly exclusionary discourse. The idea of introducing this mandatory language requirement originated from the far-right party FPÖ, which was very offensively waging an anti-immigrant campaign. The party heralded the introduction of this requirement in the law as a major achievement and as a further step in the consolidation of a restrictive immigration policy. Presenting the legislative package in which this requirement was included, the representative of the FPÖ, Peter Westenthaler, finished his speech: “With this law we make one thing clear: Austria is not an immigration country and we will make sure that it does not become one!”¹⁰ (*Österreichisches Parlament* 2002, 55). When the law was revised in 2005 and 2011, the requirement was made progressively more stringent,

and emphasis was put on security and the protection of native citizens against “abuse” of Austrian institutions by immigrants (Österreichisches Parlament 2005, 48-51). Thus we see how also this policy initiative was put forward with a discursive focus on cultural assimilation and immigration control rather than with a participatory aim.

The requirement affects third-country nationals who have applied for a residence permit since 1998, and the language level required has been progressively raised. In 2002, immigrants were required to prove a basic knowledge of German equivalent to the level A1 of the European Language Framework. Since 2005 this has been increased to the level A2. The ultimate time limit to complete the requirement became five years, after which deportation may follow; gradual financial penalties start after two years of non-completion. Since 2011, potential immigrants for family reunification are required to prove language knowledge at the level A1 already before entry into the territory, followed by level A2 after two years as a condition to stay and level B1 as a condition for the acquisition of permanent residence after five years. Exceptions are made for older and sick persons, as well as for children under nine years old and children who have completed their schooling in Austria. The possibility of an extension in special cases is foreseen by the law. Financial assistance (up to 50 percent) for taking specially designed language/integration courses is provided for certain groups of migrants, on the condition of timely fulfilment of the requirement within two years. Highly qualified migrants, temporary/seasonal migrants, and asylum seekers are excluded from the requirement and from the subsidies. A similar requirement was also introduced for those migrants who apply for Austrian citizenship (StbG 1985 [2006], para. 10). They must pass both a language test and a “civic education” test with questions about the history, geography, and culture of Austria and of the province where they live (Perchinig 2010).

Since these legislative developments have entered into force, the Ministry of Interior and the Austrian Integration Fund have been increasingly engaged in organizing, promoting, and enforcing these integration requirements of language acquisition and “civic education.” Thus, although also these measures have been undertaken within the framework of a restrictive turn and by a government openly hostile to immigrants, it must be said that this is the first time that the government is promoting any type of measures explicitly aimed at the integration of immigrants beyond the confines of recognized refugees. In that sense it may be considered as a development in the direction of establishing integration as a policy field. However, this policy field is characterized by a unilateral focus on the migrant, not on structural change and adaptation on the part of the receiving society. Furthermore, sometimes the emphasis on integration seems to be more symbolic than substantial (Mourão Permoser 2012). For example, in March 2009 the Interior Ministry started a process of development of a “National Action Plan on Integration”¹¹ with the stated aim of

bringing together different actors and stakeholders to devise a new comprehensive integration policy. Nevertheless, the conclusions presented in the interim report indicated that there would be no major change in the government's course of action (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2009). To the contrary, the path of restriction and focus on language requirements was reinforced in the latest legislative package.

Interestingly, EU citizens are not covered by integration measures, although for a totally different reason. EU legislation entitles European citizens to equal rights and access to all institutions on an equal basis as natives (EU *Directive* 2004/38/EC). Thus, in terms of structural integration, EU immigrants are given equal treatment the moment they set foot in Austria. As for cultural and social integration, EU citizens seem to be considered as "integrated" *a priori*, without the need for special policies in this respect. The same is true of highly qualified migrants, who are also exempted from the fulfilment of civic integration requirements. These two forms of special treatment – for EU citizens and highly qualified migrants – indicate that there are ethnic and economic undertones behind discourses that emphasize the need for cultural integration of immigrants.¹²

At the provincial and local levels, the situation is rather different from at the national. Some provinces have a much broader approach towards immigrant integration. A particularly striking contrast to the politics undertaken at the national level is the long-standing commitment of the City/Province of Vienna to a proactive policy in the area of immigrant integration.¹³ In 1972 the City/Province of Vienna created an "Immigrant Fund"¹⁴ with the objective of offering counselling and assistance to immigrants in legal and social issues.¹⁵ In 1992 it created the "Viennese Integration Fund."¹⁶ From 1992 to 2004 the latter fund was responsible for counselling of migrants, conflict mediation, political consultancy, and lobby for migrants interests. In 1996 a position within the local government (Integrationsstadträtin) was created. In 2004, the Viennese Integration Fund was replaced by a full-fledged department inside the municipality administration in charge of integration and diversity issues.¹⁷ In a 2007 report the municipality presented its overall approach to integration: "Integration is an asymmetrical and mutual process which aims at increasing equal access and participation by eliminating barriers, fighting discrimination, and promoting strategies of empowerment. At the same time, immigrants should be invited, encouraged and motivated to contribute to individual and social advancement by overcoming everyday difficulties despite their comparatively disadvantaged starting point" (Magistrat der Stadt Wien 2007, 11).¹⁸

Since 2006, a number of other provinces and cities have also started to become active in developing their own approach to integration in the form of *Integrationsleitbilder* ("mission statements" for integration policy).¹⁹ In general, these have been formulated as the outcome of a consultation process involving several political and civil society actors. They reflect

this diversity of interests and tend to portray integration as a cross-cutting issue. The mission statements include proposals for concrete measures to improve integration, and it remains to be seen whether these will yield a positive outcome. While it is still too early to assess the effectiveness of these enterprises, clearly these provincial and local governments are taking a more active stance on the issue of integration than their national counterpart. The same is true of the European Union, which, despite lacking explicit competence in integration, has been instrumental in making funds available to finance many grassroot projects through the EQUAL and INTI programs, and more recently, the European Integration Fund.²⁰

THE STRUCTURAL DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for setting the legal framework that determines immigrants' rights and therefore shapes the conditions for immigrants' structural integration into the main institutions of society. The legal framework in Austria distinguishes between two broad categories of immigrants: those with a residence permit and those without (immigrants on a temporary permit, asylum seekers, etc.). Here it is important to note that, from the point of view of the Ministry of Interior, only those categories of immigrants with a residence permit should be offered the possibility of becoming integrated (*Nationaler Kontaktpunkt Österreich* 2005, 39-46). The other categories are systematically excluded from integration activities and in many cases also legally blocked from participation in mainstream institutions such as the labour market and educational system. According to the Ministry of Interior, this is a logical consequence of the fact that these immigrants are not legally entitled to settle in Austria. In fact, for the ministry any exaggerated attempts by these immigrants to become integrated should be regarded with suspicion as possibly indicating a hidden intention to settle permanently in the country (*ibid.*, 41).

As for those immigrants with a residence permit, the legal framework is structured in a way that permits increasing access to rights with increasing time of residence. In this context the European Union has also been an important actor, especially through the establishment of the EU-wide status of "long-term resident," which reinforces the principle that the length of stay should go hand in hand with the progressive acquisition of rights. According to Directive 2003/109/EC,²¹ the status of long-term resident can be acquired after five years of lawful residence²² and entitles the immigrant to equal treatment with EU nationals in a number of areas, including social security, social services (especially subsidized housing), education, and vocational training.

Another essential factor impacting the range of opportunities for immigrants is of course the citizenship regime. Traditionally, Austria's

citizenship regime has been based on the concept of *jus sanguinis*, meaning that citizenship is acquired by descent rather than by birth in the territory. Access to citizenship by immigrants in Austria is limited and has been made increasingly difficult with every legislative amendment since the 1990s (Çinar 2009). The period of legal residence required for naturalization is ten years, while spouses of Austrian citizens have to wait for six years of residence and at least five of marriage. Children and grandchildren of non-Austrians who are born in the country do not immediately acquire Austrian nationality but may go through a facilitated naturalization process. Further requirements include the abdication of the previous citizenship and proof of regular and stable resources above a certain limit set at a relatively high level, which means that immigrants employed in low-wage jobs or in precarious employment are ineligible for naturalization (Stern 2011). In addition, as already mentioned, additional requirements have been put in place with the aim of reducing the number of naturalizations, such as language and civic education tests (König and Stadler 2003). These new requirements are not an Austrian specificity, but rather they reflect the emergence of a European-wide trend towards the introduction of coercive “civic integration” policies and the use of restrictive naturalization and integration criteria to curb immigration (Joppke 2007). Nevertheless, as recent efforts to create European-wide indexes of citizenship and integration policies have shown, Austria’s citizenship regime ranks among the most restrictive in Europe (Niessen et al. 2007; Çinar 2009; Howard 2009).

In addition to the legal framework for the settlement of immigrants, there are a number of other policies which are not characterized as “integration policies” but do affect directly the capacity of immigrants to take part in social institutions. Austria has a well-developed welfare state and a number of redistributive policies that contribute to a better integration of society as a whole. Particularly important in this regard are labour market policies and unemployment benefits, subsidized housing, and welfare aid, all of which play an important role in mitigating the effects of income inequality (Guger et al. 2009). Considering that third-country immigrants are strongly overrepresented among the lower-income share of the population, these policies can be considered as beneficial for integration. In 2006, for instance, 25 percent of all welfare aid recipients were foreign citizens (*ibid.*, 169). Similarly, the services of the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS)²³ also contribute to the better inclusion of immigrants into the labour market. Nevertheless, the AMS does not officially have special programs for persons with migration background, even though certain initiatives are created with this group in mind (Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich 2008, 30). Rather, it follows a policy of treating equally native and migrant background populations with either Austrian citizenship or long-term residence permit (Nationaler Kontaktpunkt Österreich 2005, 68).

Another excellent example of policies that are not conceived of as integration policies but have integration effects is the recently accorded free kindergarten year for five-year-olds. Against the background that the educational system in Austria is highly selective and tends to reproduce social structures of inequality, a debate has recently emerged about the possibility of establishing a compulsory kindergarten year. Until now school attendance has been free and compulsory in Austria for all children between the age of six and fifteen. Children younger than six years old could additionally take advantage of public or privately organized kindergartens, but they were not obliged to do so. Since attending even a public kindergarten is not free of charge, and the number of places is scarce, the percentage of children attending kindergartens in Austria is rather low in comparison to other EU countries. Migrant children in particular tend to be taken care of by the family and to not attend kindergartens. This in turn has negative effects for these children's acquisition of German language skills and is therefore prejudicial to their performance when they enter the school system. The problem is an important one, considering that school children with a non-German mother tongue make up 16 percent of the overall student population in Austria and 21 percent of the students enrolled in primary schools (Nusche et al. 2009). Against this background, in May 2009 the government decided to introduce a free and compulsory half-day kindergarten year for five-year-old children. The measure affects all children and was not formulated as an integration measure; nevertheless, it was clearly intended to promote better integration of children from migrant origin, as the official statement of the vice-chancellor makes clear: "The free kindergarten year ensures that all children, *independent of origin* and income, will have the same starting point at the entrance into the Austrian school system." (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich 2009, emphasis added).

Interestingly, these policies at the national level are not conceived of as integration policies and are not part of a concerted effort to create a comprehensive integration policy. Rather, they are usually understood as belonging within a range of inclusionary and redistributive policies that characterize the Austrian welfare state. Moreover, these policies are not coordinated by a federal authority in charge of integration. On the contrary, they are dispersed initiatives by different actors which incidentally have a direct impact on immigrants and persons of migrant background. Here there is a discrepancy between the official understanding of integration falling primarily under the competence of the Ministry of Interior, and the reality of a multiplicity of actors involved in different aspects of policy-making that affect immigrants.

In general, therefore, at the national level one observes a dichotomy between two different kinds of policies. On the one hand, there are policies that are explicitly conceived of as "integration policies." At the

national level, these policies are generally focused on cultural integration, in particular the acquisition of language skills. On the other hand, there are a number of social policy measures of universal character that benefit migrants and help their incorporation into mainstream institutions, especially subsidized housing, unemployment benefits, and welfare aid (i.e., direct transfers), which have a strong redistributive effect (Guger et al. 2009). These benefits are, however, only available to immigrants with a long-term resident visa and are usually not conceived of as pertaining to the field of integration measures but rather as universal social policies.

CONCLUSION

In sum, integration in Austria was for a long time largely ignored as a field of political action. When it did enter the political agenda, it was largely due to a negative politicization of the topic by anti-immigrant actors. Integration was used within a larger discursive strategy that sought to justify restrictive immigration policies by framing resident immigrant communities as a problem. In that context, integration was depicted primarily in its cultural dimension, with the allegation of “lack of integration” often being brought up in connection to the religion, values, and attitudes of immigrant communities. The same focus on the cultural dimension that exists at the discursive level also characterizes the policies undertaken at the national level explicitly under the label of integration. Since 2011, a new State Secretariat for Integration was created within the Ministry of Interior, signalling the intention to centralize efforts and launch new initiatives in the area of integration. Nevertheless, the competence to implement integration measures is still dispersed among different actors and levels of government. As we have seen, there are sometimes substantial differences in the way each of these actors/levels approaches to the integration issue.

This chapter has shown that in Austrian politics, immigrant integration is primarily addressed in its cultural dimension rather than in its social and structural dimensions. The predominance of the cultural dimension is particularly striking, given that the target immigrant population constitutes an economically deprived group. Moreover, it is also interesting to note that the emphasis on cultural assimilation in Austria has a predominantly exclusionary character. In that sense, it differs strongly from the emphasis on cultural assimilation present in other immigrant societies such as the United States, where the idea of the “melting pot” has historically served the inclusionary purpose of communicating a general willingness to incorporate persons of all origins into a common whole. By contrast, in Austria the emphasis on assimilation goes hand in hand with the ideology of not being a country of immigration. Assimilating

into Austrian culture is conceived of as a unilateral requirement on the part of the immigrant, rather than as a two-way process involving adaptation on both sides.

Even so, the question of integration has only recently started to become an issue in Austrian politics, but it is set to stay a hot issue for a long time to come. For the future, the main challenge facing policy-makers will be to break the connection between ethnicity and social stratification. In this respect, two things will be instrumental. First, early access to socio-economic rights for foreign citizens on an equal footing with nationals is crucial in order to improve structural integration and to allow immigrants to benefit from the many social measures that mitigate income inequalities and diminish social stratification. Secondly, the educational system needs to be reformed in order to promote social mobility. At the moment the educational system works to reproduce inequalities rather than to fight them. In a context where immigrant communities are also socially deprived, this reinforces ethnically-marked social stratification. A further major challenge will be to improve the perception of immigration and of immigrants among the majority population. The level of xenophobia in Austria is very high (Friesl, Harnachers-Zuba, and Polak 2009) and the political discourse on immigration is strongly influenced by far-right parties that mobilize hostile sentiments against immigrants in their campaigns. Of course, to improve this situation would need a more proactive and inclusionary attitude on the part of the government, as well as a concerted effort to communicate the benefits of immigration to the majority population.

NOTES

1. German for “guest-worker” or “foreign-worker.”
2. Austria Wochenschau 14/1979. *Schulversuche in Wien: Gastarbeiterkinder lernen zweisprachig*. Filmarchiv Austria.
3. One exception are the nationals of the new member states that joined the European Union in its last enlargement. The citizens of these member states are subject to transitional agreements that block them from taking up work in other member states for a number of years. Nevertheless, once these agreements have expired, these citizens too will be able to enjoy a right to free movement and reside and work in any member state of the European Union under conditions of equal treatment with nationals.
4. Migration background is defined here as persons who migrated to Austria themselves (first generation), or who were born in Austria from parents who were both first generation immigrants to Austria (second generation). This is the official definition adopted by Statistik Austria. Data collected on the basis of this definition has only been available since 2008 because another definition was used before. See http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstruktur/

- bevoelkerung_nach_migrationshintergrund/index.html (accessed 3 December 2009).
5. In Austria, compulsory school education amounts to nine years: from six to 15 years of age.
 6. In 2005 (during the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government), a group of politicians around Jörg Haider split from the FPÖ and created a new far-right party under the name BZÖ (Bündnis Zukunft Österreichs). The newly founded splinter party, BZÖ, continued the coalition with the ÖVP, whereas those who decided to stay in the FPÖ went into opposition.
 7. *Österreichischer Integrationsfonds*, <http://www.integrationsfonds.at/>.
 8. *Nationaler Kontaktpunkt Österreich im Europäischen Migrationsnetzwerk*, <http://www.iomvienna.at/index.php?module=Content&func=display&id=239&newlang=eng>.
 9. In German, *Integrationsvereinbarung*. The original legislative proposal foresaw an integration contract, *Integrationsvertrag*, but the name was later changed to integration agreement. Technically, neither “contract” nor “agreement” is correct, because both terms imply a voluntary act. In reality, what the law actually does is to unilaterally impose a requirement on the migrant (see the discussion in Rohsmann 2003, 76-80). The requirement has been in force since 1 January 2003.
 10. Own translation. The words of the congressman in the original are: “Mit den heutigen Gesetz schaffen wir jedenfalls Klarheit: Österreich ist kein Einwanderungsland und wird auch keines werden. Dafür werden wir sorgen!”
 11. “Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration,” http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI/_news/BMI.aspx?id=796272564D3853386665673D&page=8&view=1 (accessed 10 December 2009).
 12. In fact any requirement for EU citizens to fulfill an integration agreement or the like would be incompatible with EU law. Nevertheless, there is no attempt to make EU citizens comply with such measures voluntarily or to offer them incentives to adapt culturally. There is also no political debate on an alleged “unwillingness” or “inability” to integrate on the part of EU nationals as there is for third-country nationals from poor countries.
 13. As the capital, Vienna is both a province and a city.
 14. Zuwanderer-Fonds.
 15. Austria Wochenschau 7/1972. *Beratungsstellen für Gastarbeiter eingerichtet*. Filmarchiv Wien.
 16. Wiener Integrationsfonds.
 17. Magistratsabteilung für Integrations- und Diversitätsangelegenheiten (MA-17), <http://www.wien.gv.at/integration/>.
 18. Own translation. The original reads: “Integration als asymmetrischer und wechselseitiger Prozess muss einerseits Teilhabe und Partizipation durch die Öffnung von Zugängen, Entgegenwirken von Diskriminierung und Strategien des Empowerments ermöglichen. Andererseits sind die ZuwanderInnen zu ermutigen, zu motivieren und aufzufordern, trotz ihrer vergleichsweise schwierigen Ausgangslage ihren Alltag bestmöglich zu bewältigen und somit ihren Beitrag für die individuelle wie auch gesellschaftliche Fortkommen zu leisten.”

19. More specifically, the following provinces have developed mission statements in the years in brackets: Tirol (2006), Salzburg (2006), Upper Austria (2008), Lower Austria (2008), Voralberg (currently under work), and Steiermark (currently under work). Several cities have also developed their own mission statements, not listed here for reasons of space.
20. http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Fonds/integrationsf/start.aspx (accessed 11 December 2009).
21. Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003; implemented into national legislation through the NAG 2005, which entered into force in 2006.
22. Under a renewable residence permit. Time spent on a student visa counts as half (art. 4, para.2).
23. <http://www.ams.at/english/14595.html>

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