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NEW REPORT: Citizenship needs rethinking in a globalized world

A new report published on IZA World of Labor finds that a new multicultural and inclusive approach to citizenship law can ensure the successful integration of migrants in a globalized world

The current increasing pressure of international migration has brought citizenship policies to centre stage on policy agendas. Citizenship policies, both in Europe and in North America, have undergone a process of significant transformation over recent decades. In summary, what emerges from the last decades is that there has been a combination of both liberalizing and restrictive citizenship policies in Europe. Some countries such as Germany and Italy have facilitated access to citizenship to second-generation immigrants and others allowed for the possibility of holding dual citizenship (e.g. Finland, Sweden). On the other end of the spectrum residency durations were increased (e.g. in Belgium and Luxembourg) or the holding dual citizenship prohibited (e.g. the Netherlands).

In this new report Chiara Strozzi, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy, finds that neither the liberal nor the restrictive approach addresses the challenges of a multicultural world in which people are mobile across countries. The economist looks at recent research and argues for a third way. Citizenship and the associate rights and duties should be based predominantly on the principle of residence in a territory, i.e. the destination country. This principle would shift the focus onto the actual possibility for a migrant to be fully included in the social and political life of the country where he or she lives. Research has shown that naturalized immigrants are actually better able to integrate in the host-country labor market, contribute more to the welfare system, and help reduce demographic trends in society.

While the traditional concept of citizenship does not explicitly embrace cultural diversity, and so fails to accommodate the cultural differences that characterize today's multicultural societies, the principle of residence in a territory is much more inclusive. A period of five years' uninterrupted residence should suffice for a migrant to apply for citizenship. Citizenship education, according to Strozzi, would be a key tool for enlightening society and for providing citizens and non-citizens with the capacities, skills, and intercultural competencies that are appropriate and necessary for engendering a more inclusive approach to citizenship.

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Notes for editors:

IZA World of Labor (<http://wol.iza.org>) is a global, freely available online resource that provides policy makers, academics, journalists, and researchers, with clear, concise and evidence-based knowledge on labor economics issues worldwide.

The site offers relevant and succinct information on topics including diversity, migration, minimum wage, youth unemployment, employment protection, development, education, gender balance, labor mobility and flexibility among others.

Established in 1998, the Institute of Labor Economics (www.iza.org) is an independent economic research institute focused on the analysis of global labour markets. Based in Bonn, it operates an international network of about 1,300 economists and researchers spanning more than 45 countries.