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# Migration governance in the European Union: A statistical analysis of 2020–2025 MIPEX data

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**ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the structural patterns and temporal dynamics of migrant integration policies across the twenty-seven member states of the European Union, drawing on the 2020 and 2025 MIPEX editions through a multi-stage statistical framework. The analytical strategy combines Shapiro–Wilk normality tests, principal component analysis, *k*-means cluster analysis, Kruskal–Wallis tests with Dunn post hoc procedures, and paired comparisons of the two editions. The findings show that EU member states do not follow a uniform approach to migration governance but instead display a statistically significant and hierarchically structured pattern of differentiation. Principal component analysis shows that the eight policy dimensions are strongly interdependent, with a single component accounting for almost half of the total variance, while a second and independent component separates the dimensions along institutional lines. *K*-means analysis groups member states into three clusters, designated as leading, follower and lagging countries, and Kruskal–Wallis tests confirm that inter-cluster differences are statistically significant across all eight dimensions. Paired comparisons reveal that the interval between the two editions was broadly characterized by policy stability, with education the only dimension to record a statistically significant improvement. Taken together, these findings suggest that integration efforts across the EU have advanced most readily at the level of socio-educational inclusion, while encountering persistent resistance in the domain of full legal and political equality.

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## Introduction

Migration is now one of the harder problems governments face. Its effects do not stop at the border or at questions of how many people arrive. They run into matters of democratic stability, of social justice, and of whether populations can live together peaceably (Castles, 2004). The concerns that follow are concrete. What rights do migrants receive once they reach a host country? Can they use those rights in practice, or only on paper? And how secure is their legal standing? Questions like these have moved steadily closer to the center of debate about what makes democratic governance legitimate (Joppke, 2010; Kymlicka, 2015). This is part of why measuring migration policy with objective indicators has come to matter beyond scholarly circles. Sound measurement feeds into evidence-based policy, it

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gives normative standard-setting something to work from, and it keeps public argument tethered to verifiable fact rather than impression (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2018).

MIPEX, the Migrant Integration Policy Index, was built for precisely this purpose. The Migration Policy Group first published it in 2004. At that stage it covered only the EU member states, but its coverage kept widening over the years that followed, eventually taking in fifty-six countries and turning the index into a global benchmark. The assessment runs along eight policy areas: labour market mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination. Read together, these eight give researchers a systematic and fairly thorough footing for comparing policy from one country to the next.

The European policy climate has shifted since 2015. The rhetoric around migration has grown sharper. Migration itself is now framed, more often than not, as a question of security, and populist movements press harder on how governments act. It is against this background that the study poses its question. Have these political changes actually registered, in a measurable way, in the legal frameworks that govern integration? Three tasks follow from the question. The first is to establish how far member states diverge in the formal rights and entitlements they extend to migrants. The second is to sort those states into leaders, followers and laggards. The third is to identify the particular dimensions along which the divisions open up. Because MIPEX records what national legislation provides rather than how it is implemented, the analysis speaks to the architecture of integration policy and not to integration outcomes, a distinction that shapes how the findings should be read.

From a comparative politics and International Relations perspective, an index like MIPEX is more than a record of domestic social policy. Because integration policy remains largely a national competence while the EU has acquired growing coordinating authority around it, the field has become a useful vantage point for observing how far common standards take hold across a union of increasingly heterogeneous members (Boswell & Geddes, 2011; Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000). Comparable cross-national data allow that question to be posed empirically rather than assumed. The literature offers competing expectations here. One line of argument anticipates convergence, as member states adopt broadly similar civic integration requirements under shared pressures. Another emphasizes persistent national variation rooted in domestic party politics, citizenship traditions and public opinion. Systematic indicator-based monitoring is what gives researchers purchase on this disagreement (Bauböck, 2017; Koopmans et al., 2005). For this study MIPEX does two jobs at once. It supplies a basis for comparing the formal integration frameworks that member states maintain, and it renders those frameworks measurable in a way that allows competing accounts of variation to be assessed against evidence (Ruedin, 2015). The analysis takes that as its starting point, working through the 2020 and 2025 MIPEX editions with multidimensional statistical methods and situating the temporal and spatial dynamics of EU migration governance within a comparative frame.

Qualitative designs have long dominated migration research, and most of the attention has gone to the legal and political sides of the subject. That does not mean quantitative work is absent. Ruedin (2015) reassembled the MIPEX indicators to test where citizenship regimes fall along the ethnic–civic and monist–pluralist axes. Koopmans et al. (2005) approached integration policy differently, through discourse and institutional arrangements. Alaimo et al. (2023) fitted a mixture of matrix-normals classification model to seven of the MIPEX policy areas, covering the years 2014 to 2019. Chow (2025) took yet another route, applying model-based clustering to fifty-six countries but narrowing the focus to health alone.

The present study builds on this body of work rather than departing from it. What distinguishes it is scope. Earlier contributions have tended to concentrate on a single dimension or a subset of policy areas, or to work with editions of the index that predate the most recent round of data collection. This analysis draws on all eight domains in the 2020 and 2025 MIPEX editions and applies principal component analysis, *k*-means clustering and paired comparison of the two editions to them in sequence. Two questions are therefore answered together. How do the eight policy dimensions relate to one another, and into which groups do the member states fall on the most recent data? And how far did those positions shift between the two editions? The techniques used here are established ones, and the study makes no claim to methodological innovation. Its contribution lies in bringing the newly released 2025 edition to bear on the full EU-27 and in examining the structural and temporal aspects of the data within a single comparative design.

The study turns on one central question. How do migration governance policies cluster across the twenty-seven member states in the 2025 MIPEX data, and how far did member state positions shift between that edition and the 2020 one? The overarching hypothesis holds that most dimensions stayed broadly where they were, with progress concentrated in education alone. Three subsidiary hypotheses follow from it. The first holds that member states differ systematically in their scores across the eight policy dimensions, to a degree that allows a distinct leading group to be identified through cluster analysis. The second holds that mean education scores across the EU-27 are significantly higher in 2025 than in 2020. The third holds that the eight dimensions are not independent of one another, and that a substantial share of their common variance is carried by a single underlying component. To test these, the analysis draws on country-level scores for all twenty-seven member states across the eight policy dimensions, each scored from zero to one hundred. It moves through four stages. Shapiro–Wilk tests establish the distribution of the data, principal component analysis examines the structure underlying the eight dimensions, *k*-means clustering groups the member states, with Kruskal–Wallis and Dunn tests assessing the resulting differences, and paired comparisons track change between the two editions. All analyses were run in R/RStudio, which keeps the whole procedure transparent and reproducible.

The article is laid out to carry the reader from the conceptual groundwork toward the empirical results by degrees. The opening section builds the theoretical framework. It takes up the legal, socioeconomic and political sides of migrant integration and sets the eight MIPEX policy areas against the scholarly debates that bear on them. The methodology section comes next, describing the dataset, explaining how zero scores are to be read, and giving the technical detail behind each procedure. The findings section then reports the results in order. It begins with the normality tests, turns to the component structure of the eight dimensions, moves on to the cluster compositions and the differences between them, and closes with the comparison of the two editions. The conclusion reads all of this against the broader debates in International Relations, migration governance and European integration, and draws out what it means for policy and for the research still to come.

## Conceptual framework

Among the instruments available for monitoring migrant integration, MIPEX is generally regarded as one of the most thorough and the most dependable. It is used internationally to measure the policies through which governments promote integration, to compare them, and to help improve them (Solano & Huddleston, 2020; Ustabulut et al., 2022). It began modestly. The 2004 edition covered fifteen European Union member states and no more.

After that its reach grew in stages, to twenty-eight countries by 2007, thirty-one by 2010, thirty-eight by 2015, and finally fifty-two principal countries, fifty-six observation points in all, in the 2020 report (Niessen et al., 2007; Ruedin, 2011; Solano & Huddleston, 2020; Ustabulut et al., 2022). Funding comes from the European Union, and coordination from bodies such as the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG). The assessment itself measures national legislation against objective criteria, and the underlying data come from local legal experts and migration specialists working on the ground (Chow, 2025; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Its underlying purpose is to produce a comparable dataset by measuring the laws that govern migrants' rights and responsibilities against the highest standards experts can define, and in doing so to press policymakers toward granting migrants equal rights and opportunities (Pasetti, 2019; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). In the scholarly literature, migrant integration is treated as a multidimensional process with legal-political, socioeconomic and cultural-religious components, and MIPEX is designed to capture the legal foundation of that process through its detailed indicators (Gregurović, 2021; Penninx, 2007).

MIPEX conducts its assessment across eight policy areas that bear directly on migrants' everyday lives and on how fully they are included in society: labour market mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). These eight categories are examined through 58 core indicators, selected from the 167 indicators of the full index. Within each policy area, experts assess a set of sub-dimensions, among them migrants' legal entitlements, the conditions attached to claiming those entitlements, and the security of their status (Ruedin, 2015; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Every indicator is scored from 0 to 100 during the country assessments. A score of 100 indicates full equality of rights and the highest standards, while 0 reflects either the absence of legal rights for migrants or extremely unfavorable conditions (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). The scores a country accumulates then place its integration approach in one of four models. Under comprehensive integration, migrants enjoy full equality of rights. Under equality on paper, rights are formally recognized but fall short in implementation or security. Under temporary integration, rights are granted yet long-term security is not assured. Under integration denied, migrants are legally excluded (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Country performance is further sorted into score bands: 80–100 (favourable), 60–79 (slightly favourable), 41–59 (halfway favourable), 21–40 (slightly unfavourable), 1–20 (unfavourable), and 0 (critically unfavourable) (Solano & Huddleston, 2020; Ustabulut et al., 2022).

Beneath each of the eight headings sits a further layer of sub-indicators, and their content shows what the index actually registers. The labour market and education domains turn on access, covering immediate entry to employment, recognition of foreign qualifications, admission to compulsory and higher education, language support, and teacher training in diversity. Family reunion, permanent residence and access to nationality turn instead on the security and durability of legal status, measured through required residence periods, income and housing thresholds, language and integration requirements, *jus soli* provisions, and the availability of dual citizenship. Anti-discrimination, political participation and health address protection and membership, covering the reach of anti-discrimination law across employment, education and housing, the sanctioning powers of equality bodies, voting rights at national and local level, and entitlements extended to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants (MIPEX, 2025; Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025). Read as a group, these indicators capture the legal architecture of integration rather than its

practical operation, a distinction that bears directly on how the results below should be interpreted.

Describing how member states differ is one task. Explaining why they differ is another, and the comparative literature has approached it from several directions. One influential position anticipates convergence. Joppke (2007) argued that national models of integration were giving way to a common civic integration paradigm, as states across Western Europe adopted broadly similar language requirements, integration contracts and citizenship tests. On this reading, the pressures acting on European states are shared ones, and policy outputs should therefore move closer together over time. A second position resists that conclusion. Howard (2009) traced variation in citizenship policy to domestic political conditions, showing that the strength of the far right and the salience of migration in public debate shaped whether liberalizing reforms advanced or stalled. Goodman (2014) likewise found that civic integration requirements take markedly different forms depending on prior citizenship traditions, so that superficially similar instruments carry different meanings across national settings. Bertossi (2011) and Freeman (2004) went further, questioning whether coherent national models exist at all and suggesting that integration policy is better understood as a set of sectoral outcomes produced by separate institutional arenas.

These competing accounts matter for how MIPEX data should be read. If convergence is under way, differences between member states ought to narrow across successive editions of the index, and any residual variation should be concentrated in areas of low political salience. If domestic politics dominates, variation should persist, and it should be sharpest precisely where questions of national membership and sovereignty are engaged. The differentiated integration literature offers a third expectation, one framed at the level of the Union rather than the individual state. Schimmelfennig et al. (2015) describe an EU in which uniform standards give way to variable participation, shaped by differences in member state capacity and in willingness to accept common rules. Applied to integration policy, this framework predicts a stratified rather than a binary outcome, with a group of states moving ahead, a group lagging behind, and an intermediate tier between them. It also predicts that the stratification will not be uniform across policy areas, since the sovereignty costs attached to labour market access differ from those attached to naturalization. The empirical analysis that follows is structured to test which of these expectations the 2020 and 2025 data support.

MIPEX data are widely used in the academic literature, since the index serves both as a benchmarking tool and as a consistent scale for scientific research (Ruedin, 2011). Some researchers employ it as a reference point for cross-country comparison and for tracking change in national migration policies. Studies examining Türkiye's advance from the slightly unfavourable to the halfway favourable band, a gain of seventeen points between the 2015 and 2020 reports driven by improvements in education and health, fall within this category (Ustabulut et al., 2022). Another line of work recombines MIPEX indicators to test competing theoretical models of citizenship. Ruedin (2015) regrouped the indicators to test the models developed by Koopmans et al. (2005), which situate citizenship along ethnic–civic and monist–pluralist axes, and in doing so demonstrated with concrete data, for the first time, how theoretically anticipated but rarely verified segregationist models appear in countries such as Estonia and South Korea. In our own earlier work (Uyğun & Kanat, 2025), we examined the migration policies of EU member states through MIPEX alongside other indices, applying clustering and principal component analysis. That study drew on the 2020 edition and set MIPEX beside several other indices; the present article confines itself to MIPEX and brings the 2025 edition, which was not available at the time of writing, to bear on the full EU-27. Work on the index's statistical reliability further confirms that MIPEX

returns a Cronbach's alpha of .93 as a general scale and can serve as a consistent data source (Ruedin, 2011).

A more recent strand of work looks at how official state policy shapes the way the public perceives migrants, pairing MIPEX data with large-scale opinion surveys such as the European Social Survey (ESS; Gregurović, 2021). Studies of this kind find that in countries with inclusive integration policies the native population tends to hold more favorable attitudes toward migrants, and that such policies foster a social climate of trust and equality (Gregurović, 2021; Schlueter et al., 2013). The regulation of political participation rights stands out in particular, since it appears to help native populations regard migrants as equal citizens and neighbors (Gregurović, 2021; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). On the more specialized question of health integration, Chow (2025) applied model-based cluster analysis to the MIPEX health indicators and sorted fifty-six countries into three main policy patterns, labeled supportive, restrictive and generalized. That work shows how decisively macro-level factors shape integration performance, among them health expenditure, the level of economic development, and how far a society is willing to accept migrants. The cumulative message of this literature is that MIPEX is far more than a data source. It functions as an essential research instrument, one that helps define the normative frameworks of migration governance and measures social integration along several dimensions at once (Chow, 2025; Pasetti, 2019; Solano & Huddleston, 2020).

The arrival of updated MIPEX data for 2025 opens up a rich, multidimensional field for anyone wanting to track the latest trends and legal reforms in global migration governance. As the literature points out, applying clustering and related multivariate methods to datasets of this sort offers a valuable route into understanding how countries are reshaping their integration strategies and which institutional forces are driving the changes (Chow, 2025; Solano & Huddleston, 2020). The central aim of the present study follows directly from this. It sets out to analyze empirically how national migrant integration policies have shifted and how country integration performances have diverged, comparing the 2020 and 2025 MIPEX editions through statistical methods. The study also examines countries' overall and dimension-level scores in detail against the most recent report. Its ultimate purpose is to bring out, on the strength of the new 2025 data, the underlying structure of the eight policy dimensions and the patterns of differentiation that shape how member states perform on integration.

## Methodology

This study uses quantitative methods to examine MIPEX data and, through them, migrant integration policy across the EU. MIPEX is recognized in the literature as one of the most reliable and most frequently cited indices on integration policy (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025), and it offers a systematic basis for benchmarking, measuring national policies against the highest European and international standards (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Applying advanced statistical techniques to MIPEX data, and recombining its existing indicators, has become steadily more common in recent scholarship.

Koopmans et al. (2005) put their two-dimensional conceptualization of citizenship models to the test, and Ruedin (2015) went on to show that the same approach strengthens research validity. Chow (2025), in a similar spirit, used model-based cluster analysis to classify fifty-six countries by their health integration policies. Ingleby et al. (2019) found that the MIPEX Health dimension holds together with a high degree of internal consistency as a measurement instrument, making it a useful resource for researchers and policymakers

alike. The present study works within this methodological tradition. It aims to assess the EU integration policy landscape comprehensively by combining several analytical approaches, namely principal component analysis, cluster analysis and paired comparison of the two reporting cycles.

The research pursues two main objectives. The first is to examine the structural patterns and clustering characteristics in the migrant integration policies of the twenty-seven EU member states using the 2025 MIPEX data. The second is to assess how policy frameworks have changed over time by comparing the 2020 and 2025 measurements across the eight policy dimensions. These two reporting cycles are the most recent MIPEX has produced, and they were chosen because the index works as a dynamic source of migration policy data, one built to support comparison both over time and across countries (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025).

The dataset employed in this study comprises migrant integration policy scores for the 27 EU member states, taken from the MIPEX 2020 and 2025 reports (Online Appendix, Table A1; Uyğun & Kanat, 2026). MIPEX measures migrant integration across eight policy areas, namely labour market mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination (Solano & Huddleston, 2020; Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025). For each policy area, countries are scored between 0 and 100, where 100 represents complete equality of rights and the highest standards, while 0 signifies the absence of legal rights for migrants or extremely unfavorable conditions (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). The 2025 edition does not rest on a single year of assessment. MIPEX reports that its 2025 country scores reflect the latest available year, either 2023 or 2024, with the EU average pinned to 2023 (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025). The interval between the two editions is therefore closer to four years than to five, and it is not uniform across member states.

Scores were transcribed directly from the published MIPEX reports rather than from the project website, the 2020 values from the country profiles in the 2020 edition and the 2025 values from the policy-area figures in the 2025 edition (Solano & Huddleston, 2020; Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025). Processing was carried out in R/RStudio. Scores for the two editions were held in separate data frames, and change values were calculated country by country for each policy dimension. Because MIPEX distributes its dimension scores as charts rather than as a table, every cell was verified against the published figures before analysis, and a consistency check was built into the replication script for this purpose. MIPEX computes each country's overall score as the mean of its eight policy-area scores, so averaging the eight values recorded for a country and comparing the result with the published overall score provides a complete guard against transcription error. In the dataset used here, every member state falls within half a point of its published overall score in both editions, with the single exception of Portugal in 2025, where the discrepancy of 0.63 points reflects rounding in the source itself.

Zero scores require a word of explanation, since in MIPEX they carry substantive meaning rather than indicating absent data (Chow, 2025; Ruedin, 2015). A score of zero denotes the absence of legally recognized rights in the policy area concerned, and it enters the analysis as a valid observation. Two cases in the 2025 edition illustrate the point. Hungary records zero on education and Bulgaria records zero on political participation, in both instances because the legislation confers no entitlements that the index recognizes. The dataset contains no missing values, and no imputation was required at any stage.

All statistical analyses were conducted in R (version 4.6.0; R Core Team, 2026), an open-source programming language widely used for quantitative data analysis in the social

sciences (Dias & Rocha, 2023; Fogarty, 2023; Kennedy & Waggoner, 2021; Sula, 2019; Vagianos & Papatsas, 2024). R offers particular advantages in complex statistical modeling, data visualization and reproducible research, and in migration research it allows analytical procedures to be documented transparently and reproduced by others. The analyses drew on the following packages. Data processing used readxl, dplyr, tidyr, stringr and purrr. Visualization used ggplot2, patchwork and corrplot. Normality tests and principal component analysis used stats, with psych for sampling adequacy. Cluster analysis and stability assessment used cluster, factoextra and fpc, with NbClust for cluster number diagnostics. Post hoc comparisons used FSA, and the paired comparisons used coin. Geographical visualization used sf, rnaturalearth and rnaturalearthdata. All packages were installed from the CRAN repository. The random seed was fixed at 2025 so that the clustering results are exactly reproducible.

R has become a widely used tool in European research on migrant integration, taken up by scholars working with very different methods and source materials. Delaruelle (2023) drew on ESS and MIPEX data to study migrants' experiences of loneliness across twenty-six countries, fitting logistic multilevel models in R and bringing out the link between national integration policies and migrant attitudes. Schwarz and Pfammatter (2024) took a comparable route, using structural equation modeling in R, alongside MIPEX, to trace how the acculturation of second-generation migrants in Switzerland shapes subjective well-being through cultural orientation. The same monograph (Uyğun & Kanat, 2025) examined the migration-related Sustainable Development Goals indicator 10.7.2 in R, checking its reliability against MIPEX indicators. Alaimo et al. (2023) analyzed seven MIPEX dimensions over the 2014–2019 period with a mixture of matrix-normals classification model that takes account of how the data depend on one another across time. Ait-El-Caid (2026) compared the integration experiences of Maghrebi migrants in France and Spain, working from ESS data and qualitative interviews and using R to show how integration policies play out across different dimensions.

The analysis proceeds in four stages. It begins with Shapiro–Wilk tests of normality, applied separately to each dimension in both reporting cycles, since the results determine which tests are appropriate later on. Principal component analysis follows, establishing how the eight dimensions relate to one another and how much of their common variation reduces to a small number of underlying axes. *K*-means clustering comes third, grouping member states according to their 2025 profiles across the eight dimensions, with differences between the resulting groups assessed through Kruskal–Wallis and Dunn tests. The fourth stage compares the 2020 and 2025 measurements. The sequence is set out in Figure 1.

Shapiro–Wilk was chosen for the distributional checks because it performs robustly on small and medium samples and is routinely used to verify the assumptions behind parametric procedures (Mishra et al., 2019). Before the principal component analysis, sampling adequacy was assessed through Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure, and components were retained on the Kaiser criterion of eigenvalues above unity. Clustering serves a different purpose. In migration research it offers an effective way of comparing national policy profiles against one another (Seri et al., 2022). Because no single diagnostic settles the number of clusters, five were consulted. The elbow method locates the point at which the within-cluster sum of squares ceases to fall appreciably (Thorndike, 1953). Average silhouette width measures how closely each observation sits within its assigned cluster relative to the nearest alternative, on a scale from minus one to plus one (Rousseeuw, 1987). The gap statistic compares the observed within-cluster dispersion with that expected under a uniform reference distribution, the Calinski–

Harabasz index expresses the ratio of between-cluster to within-cluster dispersion, and NbClust aggregates the verdicts of twenty-six such indices under a majority rule. The stability of the retained solution was then examined through bootstrap resampling with one thousand replications, summarized through the Jaccard coefficient for each cluster.

**Figure 1.** Study flow diagram

The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to test for differences among the groups produced by the clustering, since it requires no assumption of normality when comparing three or more independent groups. Where it returned a significant result, Dunn post hoc comparisons with Bonferroni correction identified which specific pairs differed (Dunn, 1964). Dunn's test is the appropriate companion here because it operates on the same ranking as the Kruskal–Wallis test itself. For the paired comparison of the two reporting cycles, dimensions normally distributed in both years were compared with the paired *t* test, and the remainder with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which provides a robust alternative wherever the parametric assumptions do not hold (Wilcoxon, 1945). Where a dimension met the normality assumption in one year but not the other, the nonparametric test was applied. Zero differences require a decision in the Wilcoxon procedure, and that decision matters here, since on several dimensions the great majority of member states record no change at all between the two editions. Discarding zero differences, the default in most implementations, would reduce the effective sample to a handful of cases. Pratt's method was used instead, which retains zero differences when ranking and excludes them only from the final sum, and the reported statistic is the sum of positive ranks (Pratt, 1959).

## Findings

This section sets out the full results of the statistical analysis of the MIPEX 2020 and 2025 data. The presentation follows the same sequence as the analysis itself. It starts by establishing how the data are distributed, turns next to the structure underlying the eight policy dimensions, then groups countries according to their integration policies, and closes with the comparison between the two reporting cycles. The first step was a set of Shapiro–Wilk normality tests on the 2020 and 2025 MIPEX data (Table 1), the outcome of which governed the choice between parametric and nonparametric tests at later stages.

**Table 1.** Shapiro–Wilk test results

| | 2020 | | 2025 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dimension | *W* | *p* | *W* | *p* |
| Labour Market | .969 | .567 | .974 | .708 |
| Family Reunion | .980 | .868 | .974 | .711 |
| Education | .969 | .572 | .976 | .758 |
| Health | .913 | .027 | .948 | .188 |
| Political Participation | .899 | .013 | .921 | .042 |
| Permanent Residence | .911 | .023 | .893 | .009 |
| Access to Nationality | .942 | .139 | .938 | .111 |
| Anti-Discrimination | .905 | .018 | .893 | .009 |

*Note:* Shapiro–Wilk test of normality ($n = 27$). Values of $p$ below .05 indicate departure from normality. Significance markers are not applied, since rejection of the null hypothesis here indicates non-normality rather than a substantive effect.

Four dimensions prove normally distributed in the 2020 data, namely Labour Market, Family Reunion, Education and Access to Nationality. Health, Political Participation, Permanent Residence and Anti-Discrimination depart from normality. The 2025 data show one change. Health no longer deviates from a normal distribution ($p = .188$), while Political Participation ($p = .042$), Permanent Residence ($p = .009$) and Anti-Discrimination ($p = .009$) continue to do so. Since the paired comparison requires the assumption to hold in both years, Health was treated nonparametrically despite its 2025 result. The paired $t$ test was accordingly applied to Labour Market, Family Reunion, Education and Access to Nationality, and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to the remaining four dimensions.

Before the member states were grouped, the structure underlying the eight policy dimensions was examined. The dimensions are not independent of one another, and the extent to which they move together bears directly on how the clustering results should be read. Principal component analysis was applied to the 2025 scores for this purpose. Sampling adequacy proved acceptable, with a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of .739 and a significant Bartlett test of sphericity, $\chi^2(28) = 109.68$, $p < .001$. Measures for individual dimensions ranged from .628 for Anti-Discrimination to .843 for Health, all of them above the conventional threshold of .60. Two components met the Kaiser criterion of eigenvalues above unity and were retained for interpretation (Table 2).

The first two components together account for 69.26 percent of the total variance. PC1 alone carries 49.74 percent, with an eigenvalue of 3.980, and PC2 adds a further 19.51 percent at an eigenvalue of 1.561. The third component falls just below unity at 0.996 and was not retained, though the margin is narrow. The remaining five components each account for less than 7 percent of the variance. Component coefficients for the two retained axes are reported in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Principal component analysis: Explained variance

| Component | Eigenvalue | Variance (%) | Cumulative (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| PC1 | 3.980 | 49.74 | 49.74 |
| PC2 | 1.561 | 19.51 | 69.26 |
| PC3 | 0.996 | 12.45 | 81.70 |
| PC4 | 0.505 | 6.32 | 88.02 |
| PC5 | 0.381 | 4.76 | 92.79 |
| PC6 | 0.250 | 3.13 | 95.91 |
| PC7 | 0.197 | 2.46 | 98.37 |
| PC8 | 0.130 | 1.63 | 100.00 |

*Note:* Principal component analysis of the eight MIPEX 2025 policy dimensions, based on the correlation matrix ($n$ = 27). Components with eigenvalues above unity were retained.

**Table 3.** Principal component analysis: Component coefficients

| Dimension | PC1 | PC2 |
|---|---|---|
| Political Participation | .432 | −.228 |
| Education | .402 | −.178 |
| Health | .374 | −.318 |
| Labour Market | .372 | −.054 |
| Access to Nationality | .360 | −.297 |
| Permanent Residence | .326 | .498 |
| Anti-Discrimination | .283 | .449 |
| Family Reunion | .241 | .525 |

*Note:* Eigenvector coefficients on the two retained components, ordered by PC1. Each column has a unit sum of squares. Dimensions are the eight MIPEX 2025 policy areas ($n$ = 27).

All eight dimensions carry positive coefficients on PC1, within a narrow range running from .241 for Family Reunion to .432 for Political Participation. The component correlates almost perfectly with the mean of the eight dimensions ($r$ = .999), which identifies it as an axis of overall policy level. PC2 separates the dimensions by sign. Family Reunion (.525), Permanent Residence (.498) and Anti-Discrimination (.449) fall on the positive side. Health (−.318), Access to Nationality (−.297), Political Participation (−.228) and Education (−.178) fall on the negative side, while Labour Market sits close to the axis at −.054 and is effectively unaligned. This second axis is uncorrelated with the overall level ($r$ = −.008), so member states recording similar aggregate scores may nonetheless occupy opposite positions along it. The distribution of countries across the two components is shown in Figure 2.

Member states spread across the first component from Sweden, Finland and Portugal at the upper end to Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia at the lower. The second component orders countries differently. Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia record the highest positive values, while Denmark, Austria and Malta record the lowest. The arrows in the figure reproduce the pattern set out in Table 3. Those for Family Reunion, Permanent Residence and Anti-Discrimination point upward along the vertical axis, those for Health, Access to Nationality, Political Participation and Education point downward, and that for Labour Market runs almost horizontally, reflecting its negligible coefficient on this component.

The next stage grouped EU member states according to their 2025 profiles across the eight MIPEX dimensions. *K*-means partitions the countries so that those within a cluster resemble one another more closely than they resemble countries elsewhere. Since no single diagnostic determines how many clusters a solution should retain, five were consulted together (Figure 3).

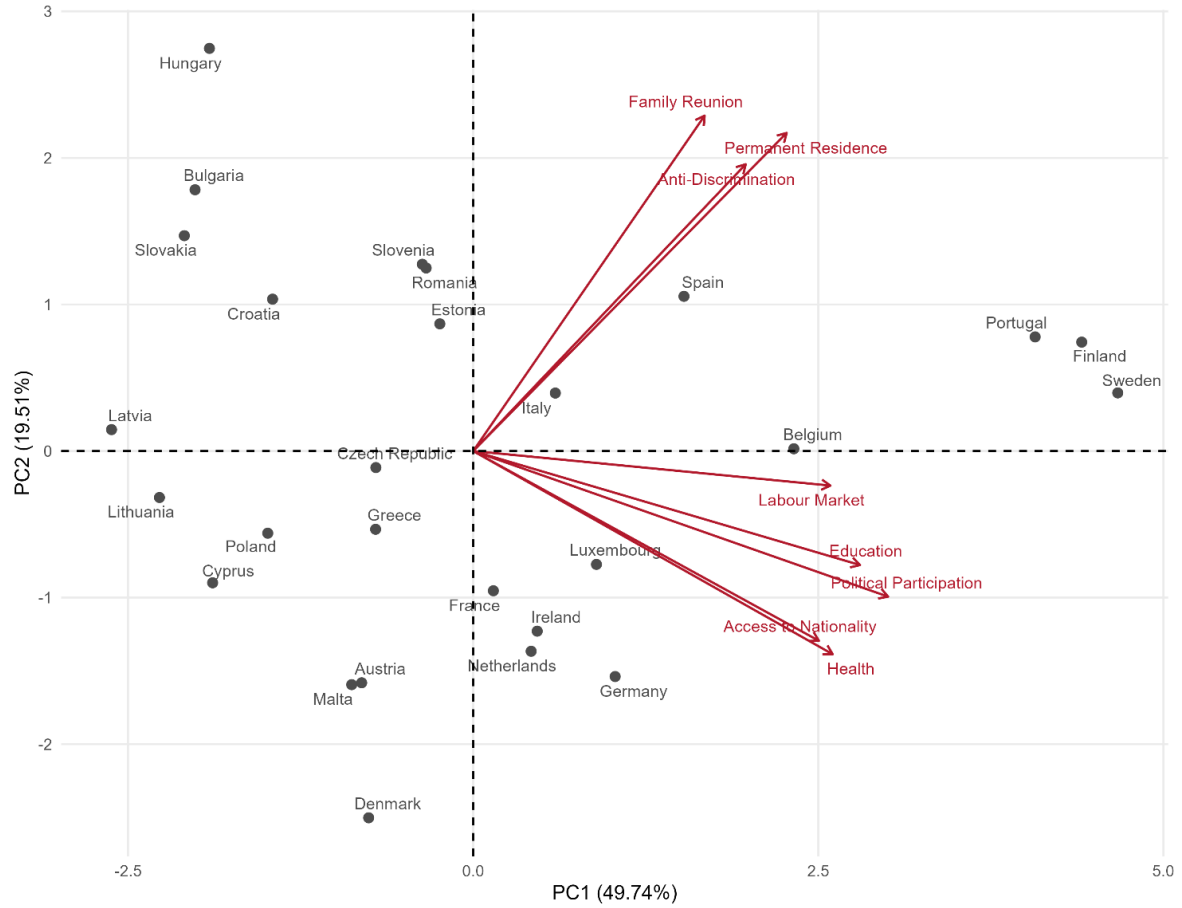


**Figure 2.** Distribution of EU-27 member states across the first two principal components

The diagnostics do not converge on a single value. The within-cluster sum of squares falls steadily as clusters are added, without a pronounced elbow, declining by 25.2 percent from two clusters to three and by a further 18.7 percent from three to four. Average silhouette width is highest at two clusters (.355) and second highest at three (.245). The Calinski–Harabasz index likewise favors two clusters (13.65 against 12.79). The gap statistic behaves differently. Its values rise from two clusters to three and remain broadly flat thereafter, so that the three-cluster solution stands slightly above the two-cluster one, but the standard errors overlap across the entire range examined and no solution is distinguishable from any other. Applied to these values, the first-maximum rule returns a single cluster, which indicates that the data contain no sharply separated groups. Among the twenty-six indices assembled in NbClust, ten support two clusters and five support three, with the remainder distributed across higher values.

The three-cluster solution was nonetheless retained, on three grounds. First, the three-cluster partition is a nested refinement of the two-cluster partition rather than an alternative to it. Under $k = 2$ the partition separates Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden from the remaining twenty-two member states. Under $k = 3$ those five remain together and the twenty-two divide, with Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia forming one group of thirteen and Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands forming another of nine. No country changes group between the two solutions. Second, bootstrap resampling with one thousand replications returns a mean Jaccard similarity of .752 for the three-cluster solution against .762 for the two-cluster solution, a difference of .010, while the four-cluster solution falls to .690. Individual cluster

stabilities under $k = 3$ range from .692 to .825, and no country records a negative silhouette width under either solution.

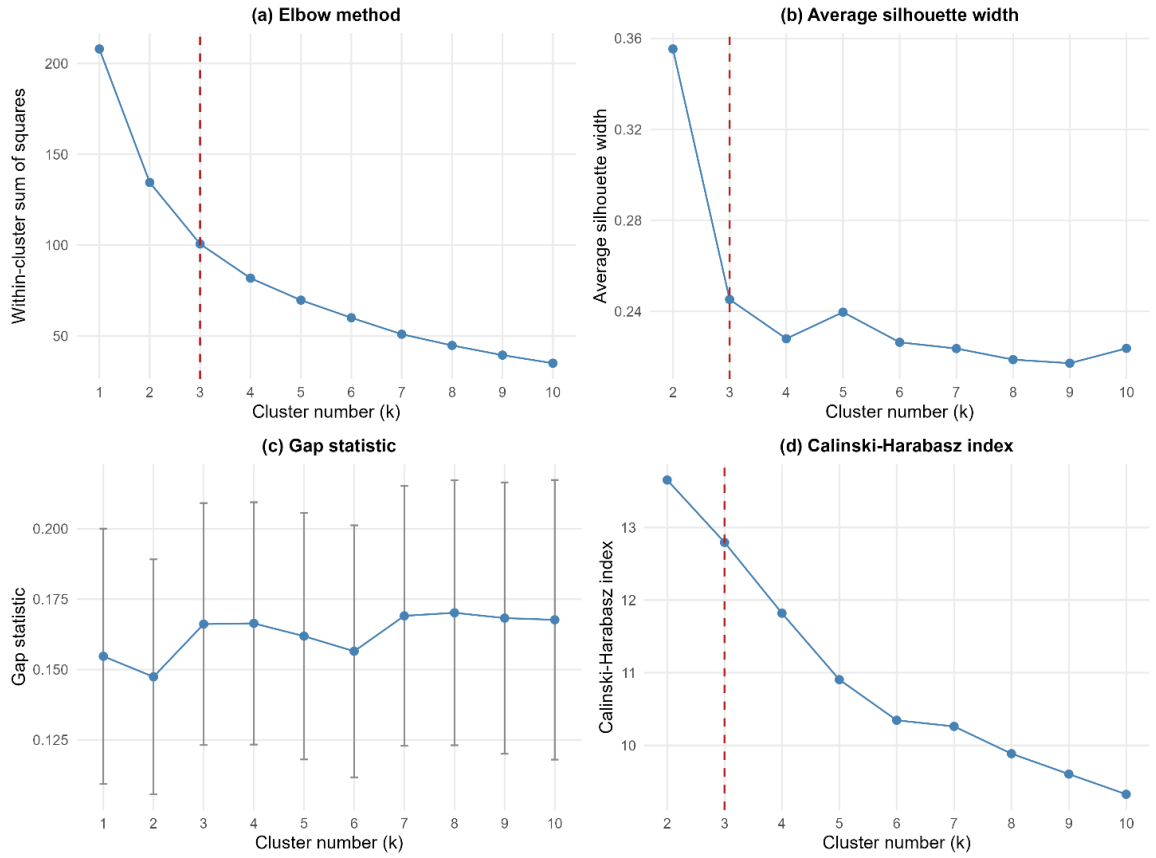


**Figure 3.** Diagnostic criteria for the number of clusters

*Note:* Four of the five diagnostics applied to the eight standardized MIPEX 2025 dimensions ($n = 27$); the NbClust results are reported in the text. Panel (a) reports the within-cluster sum of squares, panel (b) the average silhouette width, panel (c) the gap statistic with standard errors, and panel (d) the Calinski–Harabasz index. The dashed line in panels (a), (b) and (d) marks the retained solution.

Third, the retained solution corresponds to a distinction already established in the literature on differentiated integration, where member states are commonly grouped into leading, following and lagging tiers. A two-cluster partition would separate inclusive from restrictive frameworks and no more, whereas the three-cluster solution registers an intermediate tier. Selecting among partitions on grounds of interpretability, where the diagnostics themselves are inconclusive, is standard practice (Hastie et al., 2009). The retained solution groups the twenty-seven member states into clusters of thirteen, nine and five, numbered here in ascending order of overall performance. Their geographical distribution is shown in Figure 4.

Cluster 3 records the highest average on all eight dimensions. Its scores are 79.80 on Labour Market, 68.40 on Family Reunion, 75.80 on Education, 75.00 on Health, 73.00 on Political Participation, 82.20 on Permanent Residence, 67.60 on Access to Nationality, and 100.00 on Anti-Discrimination. Every member state in this cluster scores 100 on the last of these. Cluster 2 occupies an intermediate position overall, reaching 66.56 on Health and 72.11 on Anti-Discrimination while falling to 41.56 on Family Reunion and 46.67 on Political Participation. Cluster 1 records the lowest averages on six of the eight dimensions, at 15.77 on Political Participation, 29.15 on Access to Nationality, 35.46 on Health, 40.62 on Education, 46.08 on Labour Market, and 73.85 on Anti-Discrimination. On the two

remaining dimensions it exceeds Cluster 2, scoring 55.08 against 41.56 on Family Reunion and 57.23 against 52.56 on Permanent Residence.

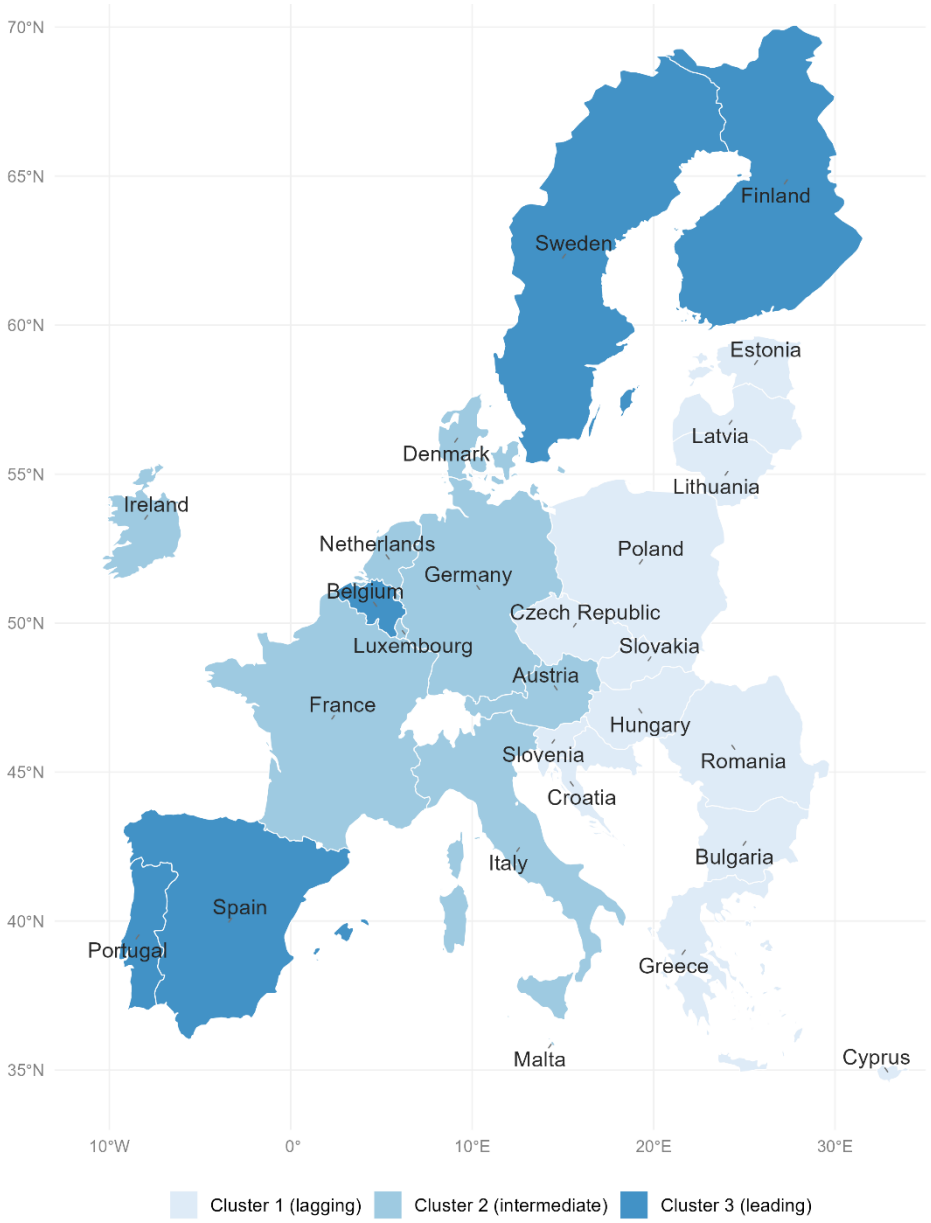


**Figure 4.** Geographical distribution of EU-27 country clusters

The clusters also differ in their geographical composition. Cluster 3 consists of Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, located in Northern and Western Europe and on the Iberian Peninsula. Cluster 1 comprises eleven Central and Eastern European member states together with Cyprus and Greece. Cluster 2 is geographically mixed, combining France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands with Austria, Denmark, Italy and Malta. The three clusters were then compared across each of the eight dimensions to establish whether the groupings correspond to statistically distinguishable differences in policy scores (Table 4).

The test returns significant differences among the three clusters on all eight dimensions. The largest chi-square values occur on Health (19.197) and Political Participation (18.957), followed by Access to Nationality (12.006) and Permanent Residence (11.246). Anti-Discrimination (9.957), Family Reunion (9.539), Education (9.536) and Labour Market (9.209)

return lower values, though the differences remain significant. Which specific pairs of clusters account for these differences is reported in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Kruskal–Wallis test results

| Dimension | $\chi^2$ | *df* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Labour Market | 9.209 | 2 | .010* |
| Family Reunion | 9.539 | 2 | .008** |
| Education | 9.536 | 2 | .008** |
| Health | 19.197 | 2 | < .001*** |
| Political Participation | 18.957 | 2 | < .001*** |
| Permanent Residence | 11.246 | 2 | .004** |
| Access to Nationality | 12.006 | 2 | .002** |
| Anti-Discrimination | 9.957 | 2 | .007** |

*Note.* Kruskal–Wallis test comparing the three clusters across each MIPEX dimension ($n$ = 27, $df$ = 2).

*$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.

**Table 5.** Dunn post hoc test results

| Dimension | Comparison | Cluster 1 | Cluster 2 | Cluster 3 | *Z* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Labour Market | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 46.08 | 55.56 | 79.80 | −1.215 | .674 |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.028 | .007** |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −1.912 | .168 |
| Family Reunion | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 55.08 | 41.56 | 68.40 | 2.082 | .112 |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −1.446 | .445 |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −2.983 | .009** |
| Education | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 40.62 | 49.89 | 75.80 | −0.943 | > .999 |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.086 | .006** |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −2.178 | .088 |
| Health | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 35.46 | 66.56 | 75.00 | −3.509 | .001** |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.653 | < .001*** |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −0.718 | > .999 |
| Political Participation | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 15.77 | 46.67 | 73.00 | −2.980 | .009** |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.993 | < .001*** |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −1.451 | .440 |
| Permanent Residence | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 57.23 | 52.56 | 82.20 | 0.781 | > .999 |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −2.807 | .015* |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.256 | .003** |
| Access to Nationality | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 29.15 | 56.00 | 67.60 | −2.636 | .025* |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −3.006 | .008** |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −0.786 | > .999 |
| Anti-Discrimination | Cluster 1 – Cluster 2 | 73.85 | 72.11 | 100.00 | 0.195 | > .999 |
| | Cluster 1 – Cluster 3 | | | | −2.899 | .011* |
| | Cluster 2 – Cluster 3 | | | | −2.887 | .012* |

*Note:* Dunn post hoc test with Bonferroni correction, following the Kruskal–Wallis results reported in Table 4. Cluster columns report mean MIPEX scores.

*$p$ < .05. **$p$ < .01. ***$p$ < .001.

The comparison between Cluster 1 and Cluster 3 is significant on seven of the eight dimensions, the exception being Family Reunion ($p$ = .445). Cluster 2 and Cluster 3 differ significantly on three dimensions, namely Family Reunion ($p$ = .009), Permanent Residence ($p$ = .003) and Anti-Discrimination ($p$ = .012), and do not differ on Health ($p$ > .999), Education ($p$ = .088), Labour Market ($p$ = .168), Political Participation ($p$ = .440) or Access to Nationality ($p$ > .999). The comparison between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 yields the fewest significant results, reaching significance only on Health ($p$ = .001), Political Participation ($p$ = .009) and Access to Nationality ($p$ = .025). On Labour Market, Family Reunion, Education, Permanent Residence and Anti-Discrimination the two clusters are statistically indistinguishable. Anti-Discrimination produces a pattern of its own, with Clusters 1 and 2 showing no difference ($p$ > .999) while both differ from Cluster 3.

The analyses reported so far describe the position in 2025 and say nothing about movement over time. The final stage compares the two reporting cycles, examining how scores on each dimension changed between the 2020 and 2025 editions (Figure 5).

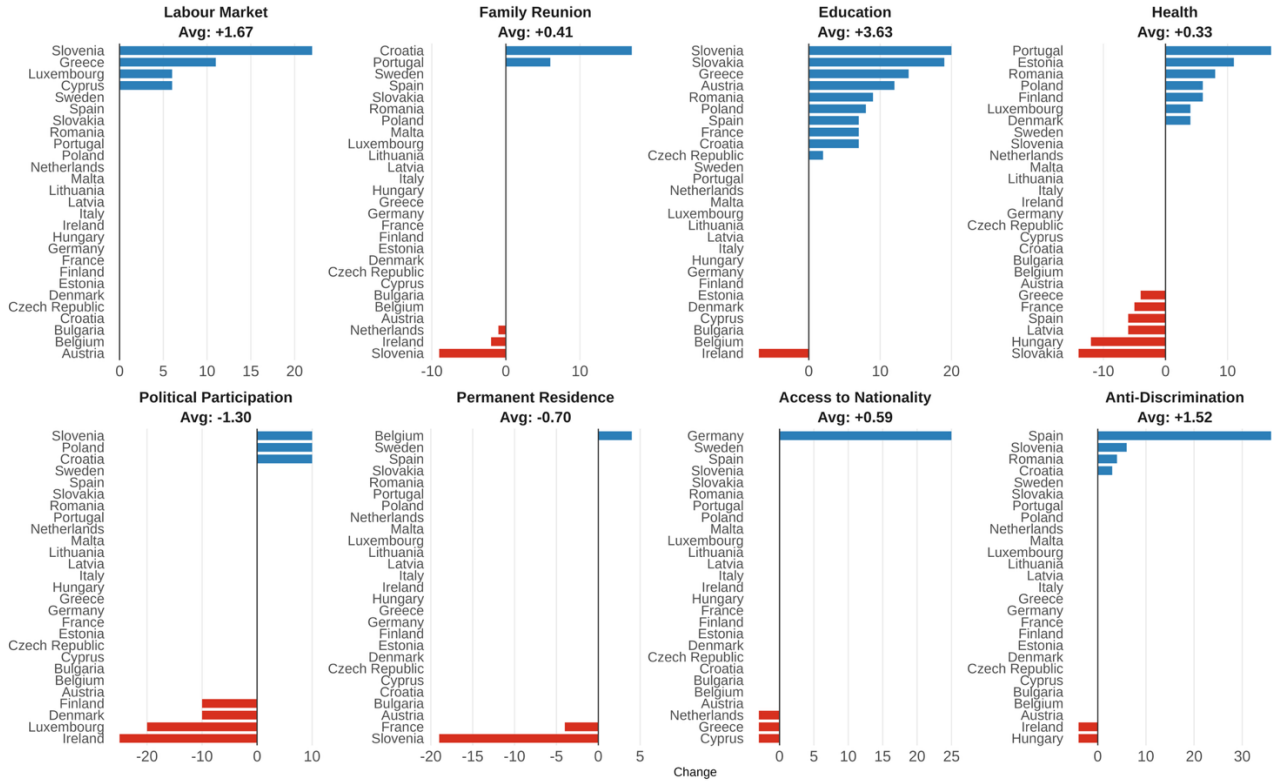


**Figure 5.** Country-level changes in MIPEX dimensions between the 2020 and 2025 editions

The distribution of change varies markedly across dimensions. Education records positive movement in ten member states, with Slovenia, Slovakia and Greece registering the largest gains, and Ireland is the only member state to decline. Anti-Discrimination contains the single largest movement in the dataset, Spain rising by thirty-six points, though twenty-one member states record no change at all. Access to Nationality is dominated by Germany, which gains twenty-five points following its 2024 citizenship reform, while the Netherlands, Greece and Cyprus fall back by smaller margins. Political Participation declines on balance, reductions in Ireland and Luxembourg outweighing the gains recorded in Slovenia, Poland and Croatia. Labour Market changes are positive wherever they occur, concentrated in Slovenia, Greece, Luxembourg and Cyprus, with the remaining member states unchanged. Health moves in both directions, gains in Portugal, Estonia and Romania offsetting declines in Slovakia, Hungary and Latvia. Family Reunion shows gains in Croatia and Portugal against losses in Slovenia, Ireland and the Netherlands. Permanent Residence remains

unchanged in most member states, with Belgium the only gain and Slovenia the largest decline. Whether these country-level movements amount to statistically significant change at the aggregate level is examined in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Paired comparison of MIPEX scores between the 2020 and 2025 editions

| Dimension | Mean 2020 | Mean 2025 | Change | Statistic | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Labour Market | 53.81 | 55.48 | 1.67 | 1.800 | .084[a] |
| Family Reunion | 52.63 | 53.04 | 0.41 | 0.535 | .597[a] |
| Education | 46.59 | 50.22 | 3.63 | 2.912 | .007**[a] |
| Health | 52.81 | 53.15 | 0.33 | 147.0 | .797[b] |
| Political Participation | 37.96 | 36.67 | −1.30 | 69.0 | .609[b] |
| Permanent Residence | 61.00 | 60.30 | −0.70 | 25.5 | .750[b] |
| Access to Nationality | 44.63 | 45.22 | 0.59 | 0.619 | .541[a] |
| Anti-Discrimination | 76.59 | 78.11 | 1.52 | 99.0 | .438[b] |

*Note:* Comparison of MIPEX scores between the 2020 and 2025 editions ($n$ = 27 paired observations). Test selection follows the Shapiro–Wilk results reported in Table 1: dimensions normally distributed in both years were tested parametrically, the remainder nonparametrically. [a]Paired $t$ test ($t$ statistic reported). [b]Wilcoxon signed-rank test, with zero differences handled by Pratt's method and the sum of positive ranks reported.

**$p$ < .01.

Education is the only dimension to record a statistically significant change, rising from a mean of 46.59 in 2020 to 50.22 in 2025, an increase of 3.63 points ($p$ = .007). Labour Market rises by 1.67 points and Anti-Discrimination by 1.52, but neither change reaches significance ($p$ = .084 and $p$ = .438, respectively). The remaining five dimensions show no significant movement either. Access to Nationality rises slightly, by 0.59 points ($p$ = .541). Family Reunion gains 0.41 points and Health 0.33, while Political Participation falls by 1.30 and Permanent Residence by 0.70. None of these differences is statistically significant.

## Conclusion and evaluation

When examined through the eight core MIPEX dimensions, the EU-27 do not present a uniform picture. A clear hierarchy runs through migration governance across the member states. The *k*-means analysis divides them into three groups. The smallest of these, Cluster 3, is the leading group. It comprises Belgium, Finland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, states that record the highest scores on every dimension and a perfect score on anti-discrimination. Cluster 2 forms the follower group and holds nine members, namely Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands. These states perform better than the laggards without closing the distance to the leaders. On health and anti-discrimination they are reasonably strong. Where they fall short is in family reunion and political participation. Cluster 1 is the largest by number and the weakest in performance. It includes Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Its weakness is not uniform, however, since it exceeds Cluster 2 on family reunion and permanent residence. The lowest figures for these countries appear in political participation and access to nationality. The Kruskal–Wallis tests return statistically significant differences between the clusters on all eight dimensions, and the divide is widest in health and political participation. The post hoc comparisons qualify that result in one respect worth noting. The omnibus test establishes that the three groups differ, but Clusters 1 and 2 prove statistically indistinguishable on five of the eight dimensions, separating only on health, political participation and access to nationality. The intermediate tier is therefore the least sharply bounded element of the three-cluster solution, which is consistent with the diagnostics

reported earlier. Geographically, the result holds few surprises. The more inclusive frameworks are found in Northern and Western Europe and on the Iberian Peninsula, the more restrictive ones in the Center and East, with Cyprus and Greece the only other members of the lagging group. This is what the study's first subsidiary hypothesis predicted.

EU migration policy between the two editions presents a mostly settled face. One shift disturbs that surface. Education is the only dimension to change significantly, rising by a little over three and a half points across the twenty-seven member states, and the movement is broad rather than driven by a few outliers. This is precisely where the study's general hypothesis had located the change, on the expectation that most dimensions would stand still while real movement gathered in education. The second subsidiary hypothesis, which anticipated significantly higher education scores in 2025, is accordingly supported. Labour market mobility and anti-discrimination both rose by around one and a half points, and political participation fell by 1.30 points, but none of these changes can be distinguished from stability on the available evidence. The remaining four dimensions held close to their earlier positions. The reforms of this period, then, were selective rather than sweeping.

The principal component analysis brings a second distinction into view. The first component accounts for 49.74 percent of the total variance and simply orders member states by overall policy level, which supports the third subsidiary hypothesis and confirms that the eight dimensions do not vary independently of one another. The second component is more revealing. It is uncorrelated with the overall level, yet it separates the dimensions into two groups whose composition invites an institutional reading. Family reunion, permanent residence and anti-discrimination fall on one side, and these are among the areas where European legislation has reached furthest into national frameworks. Health, access to nationality, political participation and education fall on the other, and these have remained more firmly within national competence. Labour market mobility sits close to the axis and aligns with neither group. States positioned high on this second component perform better in the first set of areas than their general level would predict, and less well in the second. The lagging cluster occupies that position most consistently, and its comparative strength in family reunion and permanent residence, noted above, may owe less to national policy choice than to the reach of common European rules. If this reading holds, what convergence exists in EU integration policy would be legislated rather than emergent. The proposition is suggestive rather than established, since the present design cannot test it directly, and it would require a separate analysis tracking dimension scores against the timing and scope of European legislation.

When the findings are evaluated as a whole, a picture emerges that is defined more by path dependence than by convergence. Across the EU, integration has progressed most easily at the level of socio-educational inclusion, whereas it has stalled in areas where issues of legal permanence and national sovereignty come into play. Education rose significantly across a broad group of member states, while access to nationality barely moved. What movement it shows is the work of a single case, Germany's twenty-five-point gain following the 2024 citizenship reform, against which stand small declines in the Netherlands, Greece and Cyprus and no change whatever in the remaining twenty-three member states. We do not regard this contrast as accidental. The pairing points to the limits of what member states are willing to concede. While they adopt a relatively open stance toward the social and educational integration of migrants, they remain hesitant in areas where national identity and membership are directly at stake, and access to nationality is the clearest case.

Nor do we consider it very likely that the tension inherent in this structure will ease in the coming years. Should migration pressures persist while enlargement remains on the political agenda, establishing common integration standards within an increasingly heterogeneous union will become more challenging still. Unless targeted mechanisms are introduced to bridge the governance gap between leading and lagging states, genuine convergence in EU migrant integration standards will remain out of reach.

Read against the expectations sketched earlier, the evidence does not sit easily with the convergence thesis. Were a shared civic integration paradigm genuinely supplanting national models, two things should follow. The gap between member states would be closing, and whatever variation survived would cluster in areas of little political consequence. The 2025 data bear out neither prediction. Cluster differences remain statistically significant across all eight dimensions, and the widest gaps open in health and political participation, neither of which is a peripheral concern. A better fit comes from accounts that root integration policy in domestic political conditions, and from the differentiated integration framework above all. The component structure adds precision here. Whatever alignment the data do reveal sits in those areas where common European rules bite hardest, and that is not the same thing as national models drifting together under their own momentum. A stratified union is what these figures describe, not a converging one: a small group out in front, an intermediate tier that exists but whose edges are soft, and a large group that has closed on neither. Nor is the stratification even across policy areas, which is what the framework anticipates. Education, where sovereignty costs run low, shows movement that is broad and widely shared. Access to nationality, where those costs run high, shows movement only in isolated cases. The ceiling on European integration in this field appears to be set less by what administrations can deliver than by how politically charged the question of national membership remains.

Several limitations qualify these conclusions and mark out where further work is needed. MIPEX records what legislation provides, not what administrations deliver, so a state may score well on paper while access remains obstructed in practice. Pairing the index with implementation measures or with survey evidence on migrants' experiences would test how far the two diverge. The data themselves impose a further caveat. MIPEX reports that its 2025 scores rest on the latest available year of assessment, either 2023 or 2024, with the EU average pinned to 2023. The interval between the two editions is therefore nearer four years than five, and it is not uniform across member states. The design also rests on twenty-seven cases observed at two points in time, which constrains the statistical leverage available and rules out the kind of modeling that a longer panel would permit. Extending the analysis across earlier MIPEX editions would allow change to be traced as a trajectory rather than as a difference between two snapshots. A further caution attaches to the cluster comparisons. The Kruskal–Wallis and Dunn tests were applied to the same eight variables from which the clusters were derived, so the significant differences they return confirm that the partition does what a partition is meant to do rather than establishing an independent finding. They are best read as a description of how the groups differ, not as a test of whether the groups exist. Most importantly, this study establishes that member states differ and identifies where, but it does not explain why. The eight dimensions cannot serve this purpose, since they compose the index itself and any model built from them would reproduce its construction rather than explain it. Incorporating political and institutional predictors, among them the electoral strength of the radical right, government composition and the timing of accession, would move the analysis from description toward explanation. That step seems to us the most productive direction for research building on the 2025 data.

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## Data availability statement

The country-by-dimension matrix for both MIPEX editions, the published overall scores used for the consistency check, the R script that reproduces every table and figure reported in this article with a fixed random seed, and a README documenting data provenance, retrieval dates, the treatment of zero scores and software versions are openly available under a CC BY 4.0 license in the Lectio Socialis community on Zenodo at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22843269 (Uyğun & Kanat, 2026). The full data matrix is also reproduced in the Online Appendix (Table A1).

## Ethics approval statement

This study did not require ethics committee approval. The analysis draws exclusively on aggregate, publicly available country-level policy scores published by the Migration Policy Group, and no human participants, personal data or animal subjects were involved at any stage.